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- ★ Why Japan's economy is a mess
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Money

Two Egoz soldiers killed

DAVID RUDGE

TWO IDF soldiers from the elite Egoz unit, one of them an officer, were killed and two others seriously wounded in a Hizbullah roadside bomb attack inside the security zone yesterday.

One of those killed was identified as Capt. Yossi Levy of Kibbutz Kfar Haruv on the Golan Heights.

Their deaths brought to 27 the number of soldiers killed in fighting in south Lebanon this year. OC Northern Command Maj.-Gen. Amiram Levine, who was in the security zone yesterday with Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, blamed Syria for the recent escalation in fighting in south Lebanon.

He said the attack came after 10 "stormy days" in south Lebanon. In this period Brig.-Gen. Eli Amitai, head of the IDF's Lebanese Liaison Unit, was twice lightly wounded and Levine himself came under fire.

Yesterday's attack followed an earlier, abortive roadside bombing by Hizbullah, and occurred in Markabeh village, in the zone's eastern sector, about 3 kilometers from the border.

Troops from the Egoz unit were returning on foot from operational duties when an explosive device was detonated alongside them, killing the commander of the force at the scene. Three members of the squad were seriously wounded, and were evacuated by helicopter directly to Haifa's Rambam Hospital.

The hospital came under criticism for not having an ambulance waiting at the helicopter landing pad to transfer the wounded to the hospital building, some half a kilometer away.

Hospital director Prof. Moshe Revah said the hospital had received only a short warning of the impending arrival of the casualties, who were wheeled to the emergency room on stretchers. The IDF issued a statement rejecting this explanation.

One of the critically wounded was rushed immediately to the operating table, where he died of his wounds. The two other wounded were suffering from shrapnel wounds to various parts of their bodies. One was said to be suffering from spinal injuries and the other from wounds to his neck, chest and legs.

Dr. Micha Peled, deputy head of Rambam's maxillo-facial surgery department, was called to the hospital after it was discovered that his son Amit was one of the seriously wounded. Peled told reporters at the scene that the news had come as a shock, but that he was proud of his son.

The Egoz unit, which specializes in anti-guerrilla warfare in south Lebanon in particular, was only recently unveiled to the public.

Shahak, Levine and Amitai met with the force's commander and soldiers after the incident and held the first de-briefing session with them.

The three, accompanied by other senior IDF officers, had earlier met with South Lebanese Army commander Gen. Antoine Lahad and members of his force at its headquarters in Marjayoun to extend Christmas and New Year's greetings.

Shahak and Levine were later interviewed by reporters near the northern border about the attack.

(Continued on Page 2)

Hebron deal almost complete

Mordechai, Sharon clash over security details

DAVID MAKOVSKY



US Special Envoy Dennis Ross, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and PA President Yasser Arafat in conversation during their joint meeting at Erez Checkpoint yesterday.

PRIME Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat made key security-related trade-offs at their meeting in Erez yesterday and instructed their negotiators to accelerate work on details of a Hebron pullback.

Privately, Israeli and Palestinian officials voiced hope the two sides would meet again tomorrow to initial the agreement, but US officials last night stressed caution. In a briefing for reporters, a senior official in Jerusalem predicted an agreement within a week.

After the document is initialed, it will be brought before the Israeli and PA cabinets before it is signed. Netanyahu is expected to pass the agreement by a fairly large margin. The pullback from Hebron should take no longer than a week, a US official said yesterday.

As Netanyahu sought to win coalition support for the impending accord, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon clashed last night at a cabinet meeting.

After Sharon said the agreement is poor from a security standpoint, Mordechai challenged him, saying, "I am not your trainee soldier."

US special Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross, who brokered yesterday's meeting, hailed the three-and-a-half-hour summit, saying the two sides "made real progress." Ross emphasized that the tone of the meeting was good and signalled a partnership between the two, even though at one point Arafat - who has staged several tantrums at different points in the negotiations - stood up and suggested he intended to walk out.

In order to build confidence between Arafat and Netanyahu, the two, along with Ross, met alone much of the time, only calling in aides to address specific issues.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu, seeking to further mend a rift with Egypt, last night phoned Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The call followed Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai's red-carpet treatment during talks yesterday with Mubarak and four Egyptian cabinet ministers (see adjacent story).

According to a statement released by Netanyahu's office, the premier thanked Mubarak for his efforts to bring about an agreement. Last week, Mubarak had complained that Netanyahu had reneged on a promise to invite Foreign Minister Amr Moussa to become involved in the Hebron talks.

Beyond the mere fact that the two sides spent extensive time with each other, the highlight of yesterday's session seemed to be what several have called a "trade-off" on security issues. Specifically, the Palestinians will adhere to "perimeter zones" outside the Jewish areas of Hebron, where restrictions on Palestinians using rifles will prevent sniping at settlers.

In return, Israel will relinquish its insistence on explicit language that would enable it to act preemptively against potential attacks from the Palestinian area.

The Hebron agreement is to be accompanied by an American document - currently entitled "Note for the Record" and informally known as the "road map." In that document, a senior official in Jerusalem said, "reciprocal" Palestinian obligations to Israel and Israeli obligations to the Palestinians beyond Hebron will

be spelled out. While some have characterized this US document as being "90% done," some details remain. This document will also contain the date of the first IDF pullback beyond Hebron, something mandated by Oslo 2, which is expected to occur in the coming weeks.

The official also made clear that Israel would have to implement all three pullbacks, as mandated by Oslo. He said the first pullback would not occur until after the cabinet puts forward principles on a final status deal with the Palestinians.

It is also expected that the US document will note other unresolved issues, such as prisoner releases, establishment of the Dahaniya airport, implementing safe-passage routes between the West Bank and Gaza, and further easing of the closure.

The official said Israel is insisting that the Palestinians "first and foremost" cumberate what parts of the PLO Covenant have been abrogated, disarm Hamas, and reduce the number of Palestinian policemen in accordance with ceilings set in Oslo 2.

When asked if there would be linkage between the Israeli and Palestinian adherence to the "road map," the official declared, "There is no explicit linkage. There are usually no penalty clauses in agreements. However, linkage is implied."

A moment of tension occurred yesterday when Arafat insisted on a Palestinian role at the Machpela Cave equivalent to Israel's current role. While Netanyahu made clear that he wants no joint patrols around the site, Arafat charged Netanyahu was being disrespectful of Palestinian religious rights.

Officials say Arafat was not at the door and about to leave the room; however, he did stand up.

According to Reuters, citing a Palestinian official, "Arafat was screaming, 'If you want to control Al-Burjani Mosque, take everything. Take Hebron, I don't want it. You don't want an agreement on Hebron. You don't want to agree on anything.'" According to the report, Netanyahu was stunned by Arafat's outburst.

Netanyahu reportedly replied, "I understand your feelings, your emotions. I respect that."

Then Arafat apologized for the outburst and told Netanyahu, "You have to understand the religious attachment and my feelings," and Netanyahu responded: "I respect that."

In the end, an official said there seemed to be a conceptual understanding that the Moslem Waqf operating at the cave would establish a liaison relationship with the local joint Israeli-Palestinian coordination office.

Jon Inmanuel adds: Palestinian negotiators were generally optimistic about the direction of yesterday's summit, but would not go into details. Delegation leader Saeb Erekat said, "Once we work in consistency with the agreements we don't have any problems."

"What they are doing is working to reach an agreement that is consistently within the framework of the interim agreement. But the section of the interim agreement on Hebron, the guidelines for Hebron is general," he said.

Delegation spokesman Marwan Kanafani said that "the continuation of the talks on the level of technicians shows that there is a chance to achieve progress, if the Israeli side is flexible."

Netanyahu must calm waters of his troubled coalition

ANALYSIS
SARAH HONIG

THERE is bound to be an uproar within the coalition over whatever Hebron agreement Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu is cooking up. But will the barks turn to bites, and is the government in any danger?

In plain arithmetic, there is no doubt it will survive. For one thing, the opposition inside the cabinet to whatever Netanyahu may have worked out with Arafat yesterday is probably not overwhelming. Sure, to be counted among the ministers voting against any deal in the offing are National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon and Science Minister Ze'ev Binyamin Begin of the Likud.

The NRP's Education Minister Ze'ulun Hammer and Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy are also likely opponents. Some political pundits predict heavy criticism from Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan, even though he may ultimately back Netanyahu with reluctance.

Yisrael Ba'aliya's Absorption Minister Yuli Edelstein is also reportedly uneasy, though he may be placated. The rest of the ministers, regardless of the rhetoric, will eventually toe Netanyahu's line.

Moreover, even the Hebron Jewish community's most zealous defenders do not really want this government to fall. They have no better option from their own vantage point, and will prefer to cut their losses and gird themselves for future crises.

Even if some of the diehards were prepared to commit political suicide, Netanyahu could resort to the national unity whip. In other words, all firebrands know that the government cannot really fall, because Labor's Shimon Peres has been all but banging down Netanyahu's door in a desperate bid to lead Labor as its senior cabinet minister before MK Ehud Barak manages to wrest the party primacy this summer. Should Netanyahu find himself in a political bind, it will be Barak who will have most to worry about.

Finally, the opposition, spearheaded by Meretz, will offer its safety net to Netanyahu, albeit with criticism aplenty. The Hebron deal cannot bring the government down, just as the

Camp David agreement did not bring down the Begin government in 1979.

Just the same, Netanyahu can't afford a revolt in his ranks, even if it's a hopeless one, and even if all it generates is a piercing outcry. He cannot afford to be seen as dependent on Meretz's mercy, especially as Meretz supporters will not vote for him next time around. It is unlikely that he really wants Labor in his cabinet now. He cannot move any of his ministers aside at this juncture and he doesn't want Peres appearing to have come to his rescue, and to assume the role of coach to the upstart rookie.

Although few in number, the opponents can do untold PR damage to Netanyahu, who is already suffering from bad press. They can trash his agreement and with it any claim he may have to have concluded a better deal than Labor. If, as may be, blood is spilled in Hebron, they will blame him. They can shake his power base and take his popularity to unprecedented lows. This is bound to weaken his administration and his ability to negotiate and respond effectively to emergencies. Netanyahu must calm the troubled coalition waters, even if they don't threaten his immediate political survival.

Red Cross documents reveal how much it knew of Nazi atrocities

DANIEL KURTZMAN
WASHINGTON

THE International Committee of the Red Cross has released a collection of World War II documents showing the organization knew of the persecution of Jews in Nazi death camps, but felt powerless to speak out.

One of the most startling revelations contained in the records is that the Nazis agreed to let Red Cross workers into German concentration camps in March 1945 to try to ensure the prisoners' safety. Relief workers took advantage of the disarray within the Nazi regime in the weeks before its defeat, pleading with concentration camp commanders to allow them access to Jewish inmates, according to the documents, which were given to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum last week. However, the arrangement

prevented the Red Cross from removing prisoners.

After 18 months of prodding from Holocaust museum officials, the Red Cross recently agreed to change a long-standing policy and open its wartime records to the public. The 25,000 microfilm pages turned over to the museum contain Red Cross workers' firsthand accounts of Nazi atrocities.

Red Cross workers "are the most credible witnesses to these crimes," Miles Lerman, chairman of the US Holocaust Memorial Council, said at a ceremony marking the documents release. "Your representatives were permitted into the camps and you saw the unbelievable and recorded it and kept it in your files."

The Red Cross has long (Continued on Page 2)

Mordechai finds warmth in Egypt

ARIEH O'SULLIVAN
HURGHADA, Egypt

EGYPTIAN President Hosni Mubarak had a 90-minute *teletexte* yesterday with Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai in this Red Sea resort and emerged to say a "new atmosphere" has surfaced in the Middle East, but he linked improved relations with progress with the Palestinians.

Mubarak also said he believed success in the negotiations with the Palestinians would lead to the renewal of peace talks between Israel and Syria. He added that once the agreement on the Hebron withdrawal was signed, he would invite Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to Cairo.

"There were great suspicions since the beginning of July until now, but since [Monday's] talks, there is a good impression - that this will create a new atmosphere and will help us and help the public opinion whenever the [Hebron] agreement is imple-

mented. I think that will help clear the atmosphere and create hope for the people all over this area that the peace is coming and cooperation will start," Mubarak said.

"Solving the Hebron problem and starting the final-status negotiations could create trust with Syria for it to start negotiations," Mubarak said.

Mordechai said that once an agreement on Hebron was signed, Israel would continue with further redeployment in the West Bank.

"I know that the positions are very close," Mordechai said. "I think that most of the obstacles are behind us and I estimate that the signature will be very soon - tomorrow, the next day, very soon there will be a signature - and there will be a continuation of the process with the Palestinians," he added.

Mordechai, who came to Hurghada as Mubarak's personal guest, was greeted without fanfare and quickly shuffled to a hotel villa where the Egyptian president received him.

But Mubarak brought to the Red Sea resort the top Egyptian leadership, including Prime Minister Kamal Ganzoury, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, Defense Minister Mohammed Hussein Tantawi and the influential Tourism Minister Mamduh Belhaggi.

(Continued on Page 9)

Latin patriarch marches amid Palestinian flags in Bethlehem

HAIM SHAPIRO

THOUSANDS took advantage of the unseasonably sunny weather and gathered in Bethlehem's Manger Square yesterday to watch Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah make his ceremonial entry into the town, and also to catch a glimpse of Saba Arafat.

"Is that Mrs. Arafat?" asked a Swedish tourist, pointing to a well-dressed blonde woman standing in the square and talking to officials.

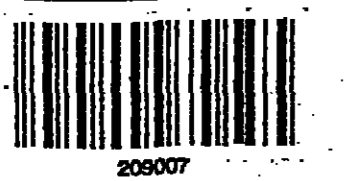
She was disappointed. The wife of Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat arrived in a limousine, which drove up to the steps of the Bethlehem Police Station, where she was quickly ushered inside. She emerged again briefly and waved to the crowd, to emerge again only when Sabbah appeared.

The crowd, mostly Palestinian Moslems and Christians, included only a small sprinkling of foreign tourists. They waited patiently for several hours as boy and girl scout troops, many with drums and bagpipes, marched into the square. Each troop carried a Palestinian flag, while strings of additional Palestinian flags fluttered overhead. A large picture of Arafat decorated the facade of one of the buildings overlooking the square.

Due to the crowds, Sabbah entered the square about an hour behind schedule. He was greeted by local dignitaries and representatives of other Christian communities and then made his way into the Basilica of the Nativity, from where he entered St. Catherine's Church.

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NRP threatens to break coalition ranks over Hebron

THE National Religious Party is threatening to vote against a Hebron agreement if it comes to a vote in the Knesset or the cabinet. NRP MKs are expected to meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu today. During a briefing of the government last night, Netanyahu reportedly promised to present the ministers with details of a Hebron agreement before it is initiated, though there were clashes between National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon and Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai.

The NRP faction earlier held a meeting with Sharon, who is trying to broaden opposition to the agreement within the government. Sharon told the NRP MKs that, having studied the plans, he discovered "the agreement was much worse than I thought and I can't support it." Apart from Sharon and the two NRP ministers - Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy and Education Minister Ze'evulun Hammer - Science and Technology Minister Benjamin Ze'ev Begin is also expected to vote against the agreement. The support of other ministers, such as Limor Livnat (Communications), is also uncertain.

Molodet filed a no-confidence motion over the "abandonment of the Jewish community in Hebron."

NRP faction chairman Hanan Porat said: "The faction takes a serious view of the agreement as it

has been presented and is convinced that it is insufficient to ensure the safety of the Jewish community in Hebron and the conditions for its existence and development. The trend is to advise the NRP ministers to vote against the agreement and to form a broad front with other ministers against it."

NRP MKs are demanding the prime minister make certain changes to the agreement including not to open Shuhada Street, "which is the main artery of the Jewish community, and to prevent the entrance of 600 freed terrorists to the market close to Jewish homes," according to Porat.

The faction also demanded that building immediately commence within the Jewish Quarter of Hebron, in eastern Jerusalem, and Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

"The NRP is in a serious Catch-22 situation," said NRP MK Shaul Yahalom. "If it leaves the government within five minutes a national unity government will be created with Shimon Peres, which will be a thousand times worse."

Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy was more reserved, saying the main principle was to ensure continued construction in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, and to halt the Oslo process.

Meretz leader Yossi Sarid said

his nine MKs "would replace the nine NRP MKs" if it came to a vote on the Hebron agreement and the NRP refused to support it. "For this purpose, Meretz would become the NRP."

The Third Way also discussed Hebron in a faction meeting in the Knesset yesterday and called on the prime minister and Arafat to sign the redeployment in Hebron as soon as possible. "Any further delay is likely to put a question mark over the entire peace process," said faction chairman Yehuda Harel. Third Way MKs promised their support for the proposed agreement.

Yisrael Ba'aliya MKs issued a statement after their meeting on the Hebron issue saying "the faction is committed to the continuation of the peace process and sees the preservation of the safety of the Jewish community in Hebron and Kiryat Arba as essential for its support of the agreement. The faction believes the security of the Jewish community is the guarantee of protecting the entire peace."

Shas MK Shimon Benizri said his party will support the agreement as long as spiritual mentor Ovadia Yosef gives it his blessing. "It's a way of thawing out the peace process," Benizri said.

Ephraim Sneh (Labor) said there were "only small, technical changes to the agreement. It's a pity six months were wasted on this."

All eyes on Hebron, but for Jewish residents life continues as usual

YESTERDAY was yet another day of "almost" in the Jewish settlement in Hebron. Once again the eyes of the world were cast on the city; once again the international media descended on the settlement; once again the settlement's leaders waited; and once again no redeployment agreement was signed.

"We're getting used to this," said settlement spokesman David Wilder. "We've gone through this a lot over the last few months."

As the settlement's leaders had their attention focused on the talks at the Erez Junction, kindergarten-aged children in the Avraham Avinu Compound were busy chasing a rabbit, outwardly oblivious to the changes the Erez talks could presage for their lives.

The much heralded and often palpable "tension in Hebron" was not apparent in the settlement yesterday. Life inside the Jewish compounds continued as usual. A music therapy teacher held workshops for 12- and 13-year-old girls in Avraham Avinu, yeshiva

studies continued in Beit Romano, and tourists continued making their way to the Machpelah Cave.

The settlement leaders huddled throughout the day in the settlement's offices in Avraham Avinu, intermittently breaking off to respond to reporters' questions.

Yes, they are "deeply disappointed" in Netanyahu, they said. No, they do not think the agreement being ironed out by Netanyahu is better than the one that was agreed upon by Peres. Yes, they will remain in Hebron.

"The FLO has stated that they want to destroy the settlement in Hebron, and the police they want to bring in here are the tool," said the settlement's leader, Noam Arnon, visibly fatigued from the pace and tension of the last few weeks.

Arnon said the he has no illusions that the

settlement can do anything to physically prevent the redeployment. "We are not going to take over the civil administration building once the IDF pulls out," he said. But he said there are likely to be various forms of protest.

One was hinted at in Arnon's reaction to the government's decision yesterday to re-open the Islamic College in the city. "The government, by reopening the Islamic College - a Hamas bastion - after the riots there a week ago, has once again proven to the Arabs that terror and violence pay. We will see how the government will respond if Jews enter government-owned property in Hebron, and if Jewish-owned property will be the same, or whether they will be aggressively and forcefully evicted."

In a meeting in Kiryat Arba last night, it was decided by local Jewish activists to flood Hebron with Jews beginning this Shabbat, to show a strong Jewish presence in the city.

Hebron University to open for first time since suicide attacks

HEBRON University is to reopen after being shut 10 months ago after last spring's suicide attacks, the military governor of Hebron told university officials yesterday.

Dr. Nabil Abu Zneid, the university's spokesman, met the governor, Col. Baruch Najjar, for one hour. Najjar told him that "in two days, he will send an official letter. But verbally he told me it is now open," Abu Zneid said.

It was their second meeting in two days.

The IDF closed the university in March after four suicide bombings stunned Israel. Two of the bombers were from the Fawwar refugee camp, south of Hebron, but were not students at the university.

Recently, students at the university have protested outside its gates and held classes in the street.

University administrators at the 1,600-student institution regarded the closure as unfair, saying it was based largely on an Israeli perception of Hebron University as an Islamic hotbed. It is frequently, but incorrectly, called the Hebron Islamic University.

In student elections two years ago, the Islamic list won a narrow majority.

The lifting of the security restrictions and easing of the closure to allow married, 28-year-old men with two children to work in Israel appears to be part of a pattern of tension-releasing measures as Israel and the Palestinian Authority head down the last negotiating stretch before the IDF withdraws from most of Hebron.

Tension in Hebron has increased sharply during the past month, as skirmishes between settlers and Palestinians have become a near daily occurrence.

Najjar asked Abu Zneid to ensure that the university students devote themselves to academic studies and not political protest, but it is clear that the IDF will not be able to close the university again once redeployment takes place.

Abu Zneid, a political scientist, expressed hope that Israeli and Palestinian universities would be able to cooperate. "I think the universities should be more in academic than in political life. In the 1970s and 80s, they assumed a political role. Now I have to sell the decision to the students," he said. He expects the university to reopen in a few days.

Likud, Geshet MKs meet PA businesspeople; Blumenthal walks out

A group of Likud and Geshet MKs led by Likud faction leader Michael Eitan met seven Palestinian businesspeople and Palestinian Authority representatives in Jerusalem yesterday to discuss closer economic cooperation.

The informal meeting was the first one Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has approved between MKs and Palestinians to discuss the economy.

The aim of the gathering was to establish a dialogue, rather than make specific decisions, according to PA Chairman Yasser Arafat's economic adviser Maher Kurd.

"We trust that with more dialogue and more openness and frankness, we will be able to overcome many of the misunderstandings," Kurd said.

"We need to open up dialogue between people who've never dialogued before," said Gershon Baskin, director of the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information, which suggested the meeting. "They [Likud] want to be very cautious about this, but the fact is it is happening."

Among those attending were Knesset Finance Committee members Silvan Shalom, Meir Sheerit, Michael Kleiner and Maxim Levy, together with Palestinian Food Industries Association chairman

Mazen Sinokrot, Jerusalem Pharmaceuticals Ltd. president Mohamed Masrouji and Osaily Trading Contracting chairman Khaled Osaily.

MK Naomi Blumenthal also arrived at the Holiday Inn Hotel for the meeting, but left after learning that PA representatives would be present.

"I understood this would only be with businesspeople, not officials," she said.

"Our party head met the chairman of the PA, we are now the party of government," Eitan said. "There are several MKs among us who have yet to grasp this, and think we are still in opposition or that they are members of other parties. It would be ridiculous for Likud to abandon a major area of its role."

"We can welcome any Jew, any Christian, any human being to come to live in Hebron," said Osaily, who is also the city's deputy mayor. "Unfortunately, the Hebron settlers are the most extreme Israeli Jews. We are not against Jews coming to live with us, but these people haven't come to coexist with Arabs, they came to replace Arabs."

Osaily called for an early "return to normality" in the city.

Netzarim road opened to Palestinians

THE Defense Ministry announced yesterday that it will open the road from Netzarim to the Mediterranean Sea to Palestinian traffic. This road has been closed to all but Jewish traffic because of security concerns, since the creation of the Palestinian Authority two years ago.

Gaza and Netzarim settlement leaders were furious at the decision, claiming the security situation has not changed in the area, and that it constitutes a security risk to have Palestinian cars travel on the road which comes within 50 meters of the settlement. The settlement leaders said they believe opening the road is a concession granted to the Palestinians in the hope that they will give something in return elsewhere.

Hoter-Yishai resigns from judicial committee

BAR Association head Dror Hoter-Yishai resigned yesterday from the judicial appointment committee, following his indictment for tax offenses.

Hoter-Yishai submitted his resignation to the national council of law offices. The move contradicted his statement Saturday night in which he said he would suspend himself from the committee, and not resign. He will be replaced by lawyer Haim Klugman.

Woman killed in Galilee crash

NADA Haji Ali, 66, of Shfar'am, was killed late Monday night when two cars collided on the Shfar'am-Tamra road. The accident occurred when one of the cars swerved out of its lane and crashed head-on into the other vehicle. Three other people were seriously injured in the crash.



Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (left) welcomes Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai to Egypt yesterday. (David Robinson)

Mordechai to Mubarak: Azzam not an Israeli spy

DEFENSE Minister Yitzhak Mordechai gave his word to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that Azzam Azzam, the Israeli citizen that Egypt is holding on suspicion of spying for Israel, is not working for any Israeli intelligence agency.

"I asked the president to do his utmost to release Azzam Azzam and I gave him my word that Azzam is not connected to or operated by or linked to any Israeli security network," Mordechai said after a 90-minute meeting with Mubarak.

Azzam worked at the Egyptian-Israeli Tefron textile factory in Cairo and was arrested on November 6 by Egyptian security agents in front of a Cairo hotel. Egyptian authorities have said that Azzam confessed to espionage charges, but Israeli officials said that the Egyptians were willing to let the charges drop.

Mubarak, speaking to reporters following the meeting with Mordechai, dismissed the issue, saying it was inflated by the media and is now in the hands of the Egyptian justice system.

Defense minister meets former classmate

A tall, white-haired man in a tweed jacket approached Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai as he walked toward his waiting limousine at this Red Sea resort. They met and hugged like old friends, not the former enemies they were.

Samir Mutawali, a retired general in the Egyptian Army, and Mordechai both studied at the British military college at Camberley 20 years ago. Back then, in the wake of the Yom Kippur War, they found themselves studying military tactics in the same class.

"He wouldn't even talk to me," said Mordechai, who was a colonel at the time. "We spent a year together at Camberley and all the times I tried to start up a conversation with him, he wouldn't respond. It was just after the war and the other Arab classmates threatened him if he did. I cried many times."

But Mutawali, also a colonel then, recalled that they were buddies and pulled out their class photograph.

"We were both younger then," laughed Mutawali, today one of the managers of the very resort where Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was hosting Mordechai.

Mordechai promised to help promote the resort among Israeli tourists and invited the Egyptian general to visit him in Israel.

EGOZ

[Ahmed] Jibril's organization, which takes instructions from Syria.

Reports from Lebanon said IDF and SLA gunners shelled suspected Hizbullah targets north of the zone and IAF helicopter gunships strafed infiltration trails in response to the roadside bomb attacks. There were no reports of any casualties as a result of the artillery or helicopter gunship fire.

In a separate incident yesterday, Hizbullah gunmen fired mortars at an SLA post in the Jezzine enclave north of the security zone, without causing any injuries or damage. SLA gunners returned fire.

RED CROSS

(Continued from Page 1)

There's a war (in south Lebanon) and there are frequent incidents. The only difference is the time gap between the incidents," Shahak said. Regarding possible collaboration between local residents and Hizbullah, Shahak replied that the matter needed to be investigated before he could give concrete answers.

"The Syrians are heating up the situation. They have the ability to heat up or calm the situation, but it would be wrong to draw conclusions now," said Shahak.

"There has been an escalation since the US elections," Levine said. "There is cooperation with the Syrians. In my opinion the Katyusha rockets [fired at the Galilee last week] were fired by

cy of its records so as not to run any risk of impairing its humanitarian work and its reputation for impartiality and neutrality."

Museum officials have so far only superficially examined the Red Cross records, which are expected to provide details on rescue missions, visits to concentration camps and ghettos, deportation operations and Jewish emigration during and after the war. The documents will be available at the Holocaust museum and on the World Wide Web early next year.

Copies will also be kept at Yad Vashem and at the Center for Jewish Documentation in Paris. (JTA)

SOCIAL & PERSONAL

THE WEEKLY MEETING of the English-speaking Jerusalem Rotary Club will not take place today at 1:00 pm at the

Bar-Ilan University mourns the passing of **SADIE RIX** of London, England widow of the late Otto

Together they inspired love of mankind and education and of the Jewish people and the State of Israel

The University extends its heartfelt sympathies to her daughter, Evelyn, and her son, Sir Bernard Rix, Judge of the English High Court and co-chairman of Bar-Ilan's

Woman killed in Galilee crash

NADA Haji Ali, 66, of Shfar'am, was killed late Monday night when two cars collided on the Shfar'am-Tamra road. The accident occurred when one of the cars swerved out of its lane and crashed head-on into the other vehicle. Three other people were seriously injured in the crash.

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A worker injured in a work accident talks with Labor and Social Affairs Minister Eli Yishai yesterday at the inauguration of a mobile unit to teach safety on the job, set up at a Jerusalem construction site. The unit screens films on safety in the workplace in four languages, including Romanian and Arabic.

'Anti-abortion bill' worries Labor MKs

LIAT COLLINS

A BILL that would give an embryo the status of a human being from the moment of conception is causing consternation among the opposition parties. The bill that Shas MK Yitzhak Cohen submitted this week would mean that abortions could be classed as manslaughter.

MK Ofir Pines (Labor) noted that some of the 51 MKs who signed the bill were Labor MKs and demanded the faction discuss the issue. "It is inconceivable that faction members help in a regression to the old days when a woman did not have rights over her own body," Pines wrote in a letter to faction chairman Ra'anan Cohen.

He said breaking the religious status quo and surrendering basic human rights would not help bring the haredi parties closer to Labor.

MK Yael Dayan (Labor), chairwoman of the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women, asked the MKs who signed the bill to rescind their support. Labor MKs Ephraim Oshaya, Micha Goldman

and Avi Yehezkel all agreed to withdraw their signatures on the bill.

"I will stop blindly supporting Shas bills despite attempts to bring the two parties closer," said Yehezkel, who described the bill as "invalid and disgusting" after he read it. He said Shas had exploited his good intentions by asking him to sign it.

Esther Hecht adds: Israel Women's Network director Lesley Sachs said the bill "aims to return Israel to the darkness of the Middle Ages and to make women risk their lives when they must terminate an unwanted pregnancy."

She said the IWN, a women's rights lobby, was dismayed that Labor and Likud MKs had signed the bill and wondered whether they, too, favored the knitting-needle and wire-hanger methods for terminating abortions.

"No law will prevent termination of unwanted pregnancies," she said, "and it's known that back-street abortions do physical harm to women."

Feminist lobby sues company for firing woman over fertility treatments

THE Israel Women's Network announced yesterday that it has sued the Oz Gum Ltd. plastics company for NIS 54,997 on behalf of a woman who was fired for missing work due to fertility treatments. Oz Gum hired the woman in April 1995. Later in the year, she told her immediate supervisor that she was undergoing fertility treatment and he assured her that it would not be a problem. However, on January 14, 1996, after she had missed eight days of work over three months due to the treatments, her supervisor informed her she was fired because of the treatments.

The woman then found another job, but was dismissed from it when her new employer learned that she was pregnant, her lawyer, Dafna Haker, wrote in her petition to the Tel Aviv Regional Labor Court.

Jerusalem Post Staff

Hanegbi promises full effort to bring Pollard here

LIAT COLLINS

JUSTICE Minister Tzahi Hanegbi has said he will take all action possible to bring Jonathan Pollard here.

Hanegbi was responding to a letter by MK Ophir Pines (Labor) who asked that the minister act according to the newly passed law which enables Israel to ask for criminals sentenced abroad to serve their jail terms here. Pines said Israel is "morally obliged" to bring Pollard here to serve his sentence "in a more sympathetic atmosphere."

Hanegbi said he agreed that every effort must be made to bring Pollard here to serve the rest of his sentence. He said Israel is in the process of becoming a party

to a European convention, of which the US is also a member, which would enable Pollard to ask either the US or Israel to allow him to come here. However, the agreement with the US meant the decision is entirely at the discretion of the American authorities, he said.

"As for our stand, despite the fact that Mr. Pollard does not permanently reside in Israel and was not an Israeli citizen at the time the offense was committed, I will act when I can to release him from these conditions according to the authority invested me under Paragraph 7B of the Transfer of Prisoners Law," Hanegbi wrote.

Ecuadoran defense minister tours IAI

STEVE RODAN

ISRAEL and Ecuador aim to continue defense cooperation including the purchase of subsystems for the Kfir jet-fighters in the Ecuadoran air force, defense sources said yesterday.

Discussions regarding such cooperation took place this week during the visit of Ecuadoran Defense Minister Grae Victor Bayas Garcia. The minister was accompanied by his air force chief, Tigré Rael Hernan Quiroz.

Both visitors held talks with Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai in which they discussed areas of future cooperation. In the mid-1980s, Ecuador bought a squadron of Kfir fighter-jets

manufactured by IAI. Garcia and Quiroz later visited IAI. Defense sources said the Ecuadoran visitors explored the purchase of additional weapons systems for the Kfir. Quiroz said the Kfirs have improved his nation's defense significantly, and that he expects a continuation of cooperation between IAI and the Ecuadoran air force. Garcia expressed appreciation for the defense ties between the two countries and said he hoped new avenues of cooperation would be found.

IAI director-general Moshe Keret said Ecuador is one of Israel's and IAI's best friends.

Yekutieli: Curb Mordechai's Eliyahu's political activity

EVELYN GORDON

FORMER chief rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, who now sits on the Rabbinical Court of Appeals, is acting in a manner unbefitting a judge by engaging in political activity on behalf of the National Religious Party, a petition to the High Court of Justice charged yesterday.

The petition, by Jerusalem city councilman Ornan Yekutieli (Meretz), asked the court to order Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who is also Religious Affairs minister, to file discipli-

nary charges against Eliyahu.

The petition noted that Eliyahu participated in various NRP election rallies earlier this year, one of which was filmed for use in the NRP's televised election advertisements.

The Central Elections Committee forbade the party to run the advertisement on the grounds that judges on the Rabbinical Court of Appeals had the status of Supreme Court justices, and could not appear in politi-

cal advertisements.

Eliyahu was also quoted in the press as saying God had chosen Netanyahu to be prime minister and was reportedly active in coalition negotiations on the NRP's behalf. His personal assistant, Rabbi Zafani, was appointed as director-general of this ministry, the petition said.

In addition, Eliyahu has publicly opposed a withdrawal from Hebron and other aspects of the Oslo Accords, the petition noted.

Thousands tie up traffic at graveside prayer session in North

POLICE are having a difficult time coping with the masses of people attending prayers at the tombs of the righteous in Galilee conducted by Rabbi Ya'acov Yisrael Afargan of Netivot.

On Monday night more than 5,000 people converged on the grave of Yonatan Ben-Uziel in

Amuka, near Safed, to participate in the prayers. Ben-Uziel, who was a pupil of Hillel in the first century BCE, translated the Prophets into Aramaic.

Monday's event caused tremendous traffic tie-ups, with some people forced to walk three or four kilometers. Dozens of disabled or

sick people came to the prayer session, hoping to be cured.

Among those attending were actors Ze'ev Revah and Yehuda Barkan and singer Rami Danoch. At least four television crews were on hand to film the event, which attracted worldwide attention.

(Tim)

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Belgrade protests turn violent, shots fired, people stabbed

JULIJANA MOJSILOVIC
BELGRADE

WEEKS of mostly peaceful demonstrations exploded into violence yesterday as supporters of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic clashed with his opponents and club-wielding police intervened.

One opposition protester was shot and two others were stabbed during the rival demonstrations that started with protesters hurling mud, sticks and cabbage at one another.

The violence dramatically escalated tensions in what had been more than four weeks of relatively calm demonstrations by the opposition against Milosevic and his annulment of local elections won by the opposition November 17.

Yesterday's opposition protest drew the largest number of demonstrators yet, with 300,000 people.

Milosevic, who has made few public statements about the unrest, told his supporters that the opposition leaders were foreign lackeys trying to break up Serbia.

"Strong Serbia is not to the liking of some powers abroad, and that's why they are trying to break it up," he told them. "We, of course, won't let it happen."

"We love you Slobodan," chanted the crowd, some of whom said they were threatened with dismissal from their jobs if they didn't attend.

Milosevic responded: "I love you too."

The pro-Milosevic demonstration was briefly disrupted as it was about to start, when someone lobbed tear-gas canisters into the crowd, sending hundreds running from the square.

The violence started when thousands of pro- and anti-Milosevic supporters gathered on Republic



Supporters of the Serbian opposition coalition Zajedno (Together) kick and beat a supporter of the Socialist Party of Serbia in the center of Belgrade yesterday. Fighting broke out after Serbian authorities bussed pro-government demonstrators across the country in a show of strength against Zajedno, which has held protests against socialist election fraud for the past 35 days. (Reuters)

Square, throwing eggs, cabbages, apples and empty plastic bottles at each other.

The initial exchange came as tens of thousands of student opposition demonstrators marched across the square, attacking the Milosevic supporters with sticks and hurling mud at them. The pro-

Milosevic demonstrators retreated. Later, the shots were fired as a large group of anti-Milosevic activists cornered a smaller pro-Milosevic gathering on the main Knez Mihajlova street.

One man was hit in the head, according to doctors who said his wound was not life-threatening. A

witness, Zlatko Mihajlovic, told The Associated Press a woman also was wounded. No information about her was available.

Elsewhere in the city, two opposition demonstrators were stabbed and wounded, witnesses said. There were no details.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Glyn Davies derided the "rent-a-crowd counterdemonstrations" staged by Milosevic lieutenants. He warned that a "crackdown against the protesters will have serious consequences and lead to Serbia's further isolation from the international community."

S. Africa blasts kill 3

WORCESTER, South Africa (AP) - Two explosions in a crowded shopping area during yesterday's hectic Christmas Eve rush killed three people, injured dozens and left residents of this rural town wondering why they were targeted.

"I am so sad," sobbed Jan April, who clung to his wife at a local hospital where their 9-year-old daughter, Juanina, was declared dead on arrival. "Whoever did this is cruel, very cruel."

Police Superintendent Albie van Schalkwyk said the blasts at 1:45 p.m. (1145 GMT) at a large grocery store and a pharmacy a few blocks away were caused by pieces of pipe packed with commercial explosives. A 500,000 rand (\$110,000) reward was offered for information leading to convictions of those responsible.

Survivors described scenes of horror and chaos in the Shoprite Checkers supermarket in central Worcester, a farming town in the Western Cape wine country 100 kilometers northeast of Cape Town.

"I was standing in the queue to pay when I saw a white light and flames burning," said Anita April, who left her two children outside the store's entrance near the concrete trash bins where the bomb apparently was hidden.

Standing barefoot in the arms of her husband at Eben Donges hospital, she told how she rode in the ambulance with her daughter.

"Juanina was in too much pain to even cry," she said, breaking down. "She was hit in the stomach. They had shot her liver away."

In another room, 14-year-old Thembelane Present lay in bed with bandages on his head, chest and arms. He pleaded for someone to tell his parents what happened, explaining they don't have a telephone at home.

Dr. Helise Schumann at Eben Donges confirmed three deaths - two children and an adult. She said 49 injured people were at the hospital but that 20 or so were expected to be discharged soon because their wounds are relatively minor.

Saudi Arabia charges British nurses with murder

LONDON (Reuters) - Two British nurses working in Saudi Arabia have been charged with murdering an Australian colleague, the Saudi embassy in London said yesterday.

Deborah Kim Parry, 41, and Lucille McLaughlin, 31, had been held for questioning over the death of nurse Yvonne Gilford, 55, at the King Fahd Military Medical Complex in Dhahran.

Gilford's body was found in her room on December 11. She had been stabbed four times, battered with a hammer and smothered.

"There will be a trial which will examine the case in detail," an embassy statement said. "The Saudi government will ensure justice for all concerned."

The case almost caused a diplomatic crisis when Saudi officials at first refused requests from British

diplomats to visit the two nurses in custody in Dhahran. But the London Foreign Office said Saudi authorities had finally agreed to allow local embassy staff to visit the two women, who have been held since Friday, and British consul Lawson Ross had been to see them.

"They both told him they were being treated well," a Foreign Office spokesman said. "He helped facilitate calls to their families and both have been allowed by the prison authorities to collect some personal possessions."

They also asked Ross to help to arrange legal advice for them, the spokesman added.

Human rights groups have expressed concern over the detention of the two women, who might be beheaded in public if convicted of murder.

Thieves nabbed hiding in Miami toy shop ceiling

MIAMI (Reuters) - It is not only the man with the white beard and red suit who drops from the rooftop at Christmas in Miami - two men allegedly planning to raid a toy store were caught hiding in an air conditioning duct in a ceiling.

The men were waiting for the Toys R Us store to close on Monday so they could rifle the tills and rob the employees, police said yesterday. But they were talking so loudly they were overheard by employees, who called police.

The two were found in the ceiling along with guns, wirecutters, ski masks, gloves and flashlights.

"It was a Christmas surprise for them," North Miami Beach Police Commander Alan Graham said.

Peru prays for Christmas miracle to free hostages

LIMA (Reuters) - Marxist rebels fell silent yesterday on the fate of an estimated 140 hostages they were holding as Peru prayed for a Christmas miracle to set the captives free.

No communication has come from the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) hostage-takers since President Alberto Fujimori sent them a stern message on Saturday telling them to surrender and release all their prisoners.

The captives, mostly top Peruvian government officials, Japanese businessmen or ambassadors to Peru, faced a nightmare Christmas under the guns of the rebels in foul, unsanitary conditions without water or electricity.

Plunged into gloom by the crisis, Peruvians prepared for a miserable Yuletide. One local bishop, Miguel Irujo, urged his countrymen not to celebrate at all. "We cannot have parties or be frivolous," he said.

Local television played specially composed songs and messages for the captives, but the lack of electricity inside the besieged residence meant it was unlikely the hostages would hear them. Overnight, a small group of Roman Catholic Peruvians held a

candlelit vigil nearby. Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, whose government has most at stake in the affair after Peru's because of a large number of Japanese hostages, predicted yesterday that the crisis would be a long, drawn-out affair. Lima would try to wear out the terrorists down rather than flush them out by force, he said.

"I think it will take time to resolve the crisis," Hashimoto told reporters shortly after speaking by telephone to Fujimori, a Peruvian whose parents came from Japan. "The fact that it will take time means that no get-tough approach will be taken."

Fujimori's government believes the ball is now firmly in the court of the 20 or so rebels and wants them to give a response to its proposals before making any move. Peruvian media reported.

The government has given no official information to the hordes of waiting world media since the crisis began but rumors have swirled thick and fast. One story making the rounds among diplomats in Lima was that the government might be secretly negotiating a safe passage to Cuba for the rebels in exchange for the release of all the hostages.

Over 2,000 arrested upon return to Rwanda

KIGALI, Rwanda (AP) - Rwandan authorities have detained more than 2,000 people in a struggle to meet demands for justice by survivors of the 1994 genocide that left more than 500,000 people dead.

The mostly Hutu refugees, returning from camps in Tanzania and Zaire over the last two months, have been detained on suspicion of participating in the slaughter, UN human rights monitors said yesterday. Many of them have turned themselves in rather than face angry villagers.

Meanwhile, the flow of refugees returning from Tanzania continued yesterday as more than 30,000 refugees crossed into Rwanda, said Paul Stromberg, UN refugee agency spokesman in Kigali. About 40,000 returned home Monday and the flow was expected to continue throughout the week.

The refugees fled in mid-1994 following the state-organized massacre of more than 500,000 people, most of them Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus.

Shepherded by extremist Hutu leaders, the mainly Hutu refugees fled Rwanda when the Hutu government fell to Tutsi-led rebels. The refugees remained under the control of extremist leaders and

refused to return home, fearing retaliation for the murders.

"There will be a higher number of people detained as more people return. We hope the government will charge these people quickly," Stromberg said.

While leaders of the genocide living in Zaire have been able to escape repatriation to Rwanda, Tanzanian authorities have ordered all refugees to return home, leading to more arrests, Stromberg said.

"These are small communities, so it is unlikely that when someone who participated in the genocide returns home they will go unnoticed," Stromberg said. "Some of these people who know they are guilty know they would face vigilante justice, so they turn themselves in instead."

Aid workers in the areas where the refugees are returning have reported few problems, but there have been incidents in some parts of the country.

A UN official in southeastern Rwanda said there have been a number of attempted lynchings.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has sent more than 135 observers to Rwanda in an attempt to ensure observation of international norms on human rights.

Jazz musician and club owner Ronnie Scott dies at 69

LONDON (AP) - Jazz musician Ronnie Scott, whose London club was a mecca for the world's leading jazz musicians, singers and their fans, has died at 69.

The tenor saxophonist, one of the founding fathers of modern jazz in Britain, collapsed and died at his home in Chelsea on Monday night.

"Ronnie's death is a very big blow for all of us - it was so unexpected," said bandleader, composer and fellow saxophonist John Dankworth, who played alongside Ronnie Scott since the late 1940s.

Scott was born near Petticoat Lane in London's tough East End, the son of Joseph Schatt, a Russian Jewish immigrant who changed his name to the more British-sounding Jock Scott, and who was a saxophonist in Jack Hyton's band, one of London's leading dance bands before World War II.

Scott left school at age 15, found a job in a shop selling sheet music and in his spare time joined other musicians whenever they would let him.

Scott opened Ronnie Scott's Club in a basement in central London's Soho district in 1959.

Inspired by the music of Charlie Parker and the New York bebop scene, by Dizzie Gillespie and by Thelonious Monk, Scott and his business partner Pete King turned the club into Britain's leading venue for modern jazz.

The list of those who played there includes the Count Basie Band, Stan Getz, Ella Fitzgerald, Sonny Rollins and rock musician Jimi Hendrix.

Scott recently stopped playing tenor saxophone, but last week

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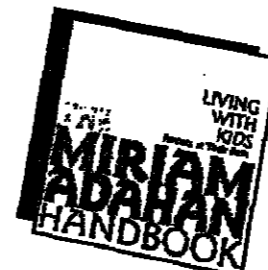
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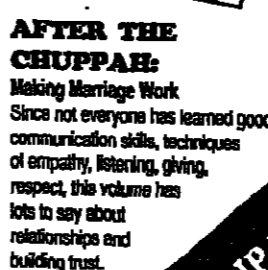
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Hamas/PLO rapprochement unlikely to stop terror

DURING the last couple of weeks, Israeli commentators on Palestinian affairs have been encouraged by the latest declarations of Moslem leaders in Gaza which indicated to them that Hamas has decided to abandon its military struggle. This continued the new wave of optimism that started recently with the large Moslem gathering in Khan Yunis, where, for the first time, a large picture of Arafat was hung beside those of Hamas heroes, and the general line of the speeches was "reconciliation with the Authority."

There is no doubt that there is an ongoing process of rapprochement between the Palestinian Authority and the local leaders of the Moslem Brotherhood in

Gaza. One of the main Moslem figures in the Gaza Strip, Imad Faluji, even joined the PA as a minister. The gathering in Khan Yunis further advanced this line of development. The question remains, however, whether this development will really put an end to Islamic terrorism against Israel. And the answer, is probably not.

The issue of stopping jihad activity against Israel has less to do with the PA and Hamas coming closer to each other, than with *hudna* - cease-fire with the Jewish State. To Hamas, there are many prerequisites necessary for *hudna* to materialize - a basic one being that the cease-fire will be achieved directly with the movement, not through the Authority. On this basic issue there is a dispute

ANALYSIS PINHAS INBARI

between the Gaza-based leadership, known to be close to the arrested leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, and the politburo which is located outside the Palestinian territories. While the Gaza-based leadership decided to refrain from open confrontations with the PA, after their bitter experiences in Palestinian jails, the outside politburo still keeps the original anti-Oslo fervor, demanding that the local leadership go on with the struggle.

After the wave of suicide bombs that shattered Israeli cities earlier this year,

and after the strict closures imposed on the Palestinians, the dispute between the two leaderships became tougher. "Do not impose on us a burden we cannot bear," the "inside" Hamas leaders told their colleagues "outside." As no agreement was reached, the local leaders decided to establish a "politburo" rival to the one "outside," principally in Amman and Damascus. This decision was announced by the spokesman of the movement in Gaza, Dr. Mahmud Zahhar, in an interview in the *al-Quds* daily newspaper.

This move started a couple of months ago, when the West Bank leaders asked the international leadership in Europe to recognize it as separate from the Amman center. For now, the Moslem Brotherhood international leadership refuses to recognize the Palestinians as separate from the Jordanians, and imposed Jordanian seniority on them.

Whether or not this leadership recognized Palestinian "independence" is not clear, but Jordanian Moslem Brothers became furious to hear their Palestinian colleagues' demands, and in the exchange of accusations it was made clear that the real representative of the "outside" politburo in Gaza was Dr. Abd al-Aziz Rantisi, currently in an Israeli prison. This means

that the possibility of "inside" Moslem Brothers organizing independent of the "outside" movement, and establishing a politburo of their own, will have nothing to do with a cessation of terrorism. On the contrary, there is a danger that the "outside" politburo - in order to stress the fact that it holds the military option - will decide to carry on new military attacks on Israeli targets.

One of the "outside" claims against Zahhar and his colleagues in Gaza, is that under PA rule they lost their free will and right to make decisions, and their rapprochement with the PA is not a matter of conviction, but of coercion. What seems to be certain is that they will not agree to Arafat mediating a cease-fire with Israel.

Gulf Arabs bemoan brideprices, divorce rates

NASSER AH says he could never afford a wife from his native United Arab Emirates because he would live in debt all his life to meet soaring "brideprices" and wedding costs.

"As much as one would like to, getting married to an Emirati girl will ruin your pocket, especially if you have no rich father to count on," said the US-educated banker.

"She will make impossible demands which will force you to look for a foreign wife. And her parents will insist on a 1,001-night wedding party at a hotel to show off."

a relatively open society where alcohol is available in hotels and foreign women wear bikinis on beaches and walk in short skirts on the streets.

Westerners who have helped transform Gulf Arab countries from desert backwaters to lands of gleaming skyscrapers and luxury cars have also spread Western culture that is resented by older generations, experts say.

"All this helped dilute traditions," said Moza al-Abbar, a labor and social affairs ministry official.

Rising divorce rates have fueled concerns.

"Even if divorce is an international phenomenon, we see this as a dangerous indicator as we fear it will mushroom," said Jamal al-Bah, who heads the UAE state-sponsored Marriage Fund set up in 1992 to encourage nationals to marry local women. Divorce has even hit Saudi Arabia, the most conservative and influential state in the region where restrictions on women extend to a ban on their driving cars.

In the Saudi capital, Riyadh, officials reported 8,500 marriages and 3,000 divorces in 1995, especially among younger couples and older men taking second wives, sometimes teenagers.

"One marriage every hour and one divorce every six hours in Saudi Arabia," screamed the headline of a local newspaper.

Divorce in Kuwait is still climbing after the 1991 Gulf War.

It increased by 7 percent during the first half of this year compared with 1995, according to Justice Ministry figures released recently. Failed marriages jumped up to 31 percent in 1991 from 21 percent in 1990.

In the tiny island state of Bahrain, there were 3,321 marriages and 691 divorces last year, court documents showed.

The drive to reduce mixed-marriage is faced with tough obstacles in several Gulf Arab states, where massive war costs and deficit budgets are forcing rulers to ease lavish state subsidies for their pampered citizens.

Fewer men are able to afford lavish and expensive wedding receptions.

Women also have complaints. Some say they are faced with infidelity and neglect. "He used to go out every night with his friends and return home drunk," said 35-year-old Saudi divorcee Waisa Ahmed, a mother of three. "In addition, he used to forget all about us and travel abroad for months with friends..." (Reuters)

Considering Moslem men may take up to four wives at the same time, high marriage costs are driving up to 40 percent of UAE men to seek a foreign wife, a trend officials blame for rising divorce rates and a growing number of UAE spinsters.

Brideprices have gone up to between 25,000 (NIS 22,500) and 100,000 dirhams (NIS 90,000) from 500 dirhams (NIS 1,600) in the 1960s. This excludes gold gifts and lavish wedding parties thrown in hotels that cost between 5,000 and 250,000 dirhams.

The UAE has launched an anti-divorce campaign and is considering banning its men from marrying non-Arabs to shield society from the "bad influences" of mixed marriages.

Saudi Arabia, Oman and Qatar have all imposed similar restrictions on mixed marriages.

Thirty-six in every 100 marriages in the UAE in recent years ended in divorce, compared with 10 break-ups in every 100 marriages in the 1980s, according to a recent study by the Labor and Social Affairs Ministry.

Mixed unions are not the only reason for more divorce in the Gulf States.

Social workers link greater openness, more women joining the labor force and improved living standards after the oil boom in the 1970s, to failed marriages across Gulf Arab states that have long shunned break-ups as shameful and despicable.

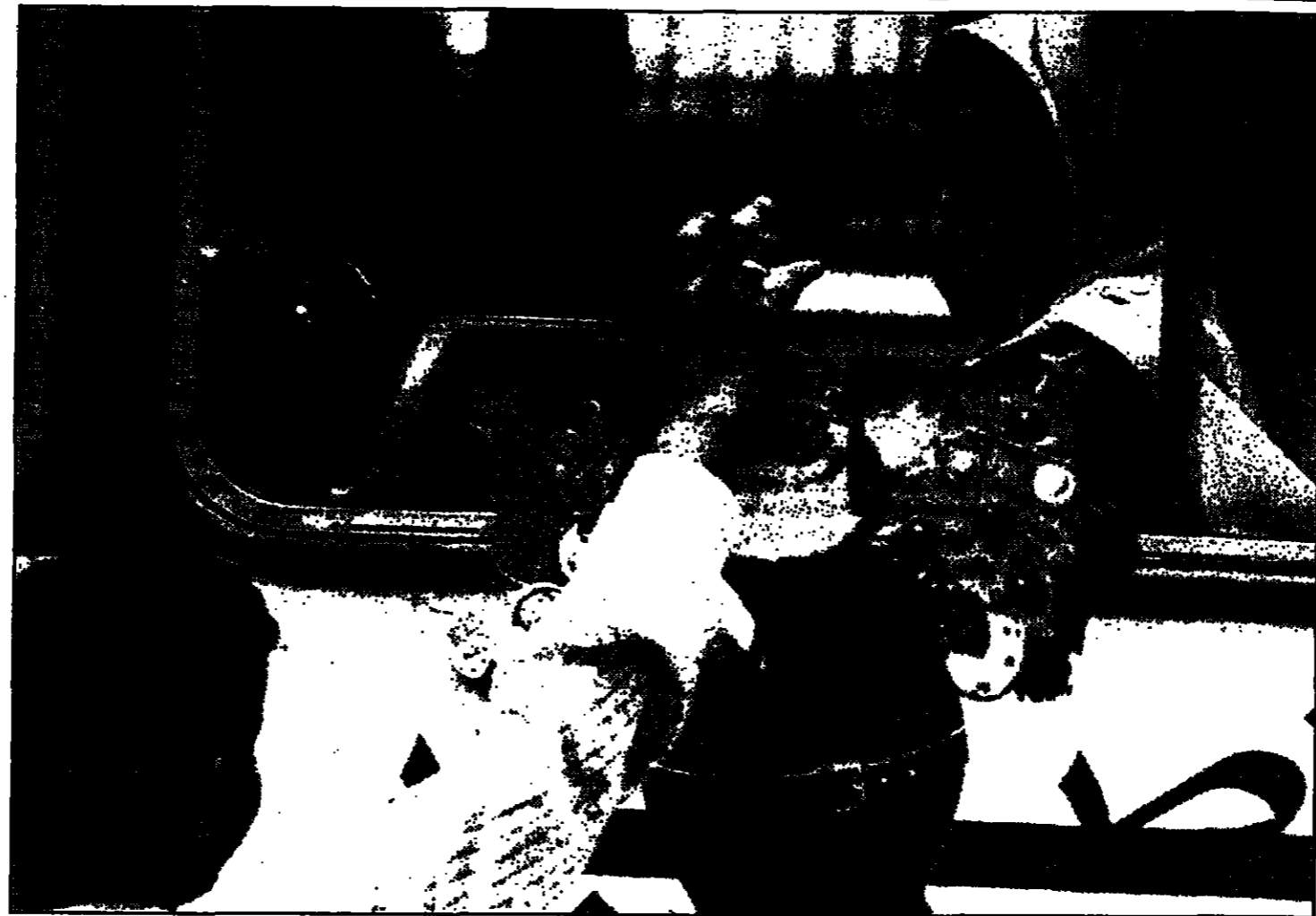
Family interference, immaturity, money problems, different backgrounds, physical abuse, infertility and traditions banning men from dating their wives before marriage are also blamed for rising divorce rates.

Many younger Gulf Arabs question the traditional marriage process in the region - where most women are covered in black shawls and most unions are arranged by parents chiefly concerned with status and money.

That also holds true in the UAE,

But like everywhere else, Christmas and New Year mean big business in Egypt. Even street peddlers selling packs of tissues shift to selling paper Santas and tree decorations. El-Masry, the toy-store owner, estimated his sales in the weeks before Christmas were double what he made in several months. He has introduced home-delivered toys to Cairo, with Santa as the messenger. "Sometimes parents ask us, so that *Baba Noel* can tell their child something like 'stop sucking your thumb,' or 'study well at school.'" The shop charges Eg\$10 pounds (\$3) for delivery.

El-Masry said he is a Moslem but makes an occasion of Christmas at his home. "Why shouldn't a Moslem make his children happy at the end of the year?" he said, laughing.



A boy tries to sell a paper Santa Claus to a Moslem woman riding a bus at a busy intersection in downtown Cairo Monday. (AP)

Father Christmas comes to Egypt - and not all are pleased

MARIAM SAMI

TO five-year-old Aha Fathy, Santa Claus is a bad man. "He kidnaps children... and then plays with them," she said, clutching a small doll of the paunchy, red-dressed man known in Egypt as "*Baba Noel*," Arabic for Father Christmas. She could not say where she got that idea, but said she had never heard that *Baba Noel* gives presents to children.

Aha's older sister, Hayam, a florist in her 20s, plans no celebrations for Christmas. "I am a Moslem, and Christmas is not my feast," said Hayam, who wore a veil in line with Islam's call for modesty.

But in Egypt - a country of nearly 50 million Moslems and 10 million Coptic Christians - more and more fuss is being made over Christmas and New Year's Day, despite criticism from strict

Moslems that the holidays are a Western intrusion.

Christmas was introduced to many Egyptians through Western television programs. Toy-shop owner Adel el-Masry said most of his Christmas customers were from "the class which travels to Europe and whose children study at foreign schools." Affluent parents - Moslems and Copts - buy expensive gifts for their children and take them to listen to Christmas carols sung in the lobbies of five-star hotels - some decorated to look like a snow-swept forest.

Christmas trees are now sold in many Cairo neighborhoods, ranging in price from 50 Egyptian pounds (\$15) for the home-grown variety to Eg\$600 (\$180) for imported pines.

On New Year's Eve, the wealthy can celebrate at a night club, paying nearly Eg\$700 (\$200) per person for a show and dinner including pheasant and champagne.

The money spent on Christmas and New Year's Eve offend many Egyptians - an Eg\$700 dinner is about double a teacher's monthly salary. And some Moslem religious leaders also have warned Egyptians against imported festivities like the Western Christmas on December 25.

Egypt's Copts mark their Christmas on January 7. Although Islam recognizes Jesus as a prophet, his birth is not a Moslem holiday, and January 1 as New Year's Day does not mesh with the Islamic calendar.

But like everywhere else, Christmas and New Year mean big business in Egypt. Even street peddlers selling packs of tissues shift to selling paper Santas and tree decorations. El-Masry, the toy-store owner, estimated his sales in the weeks before Christmas were double what he made in several months. He has introduced home-delivered toys to Cairo, with Santa as the messenger. "Sometimes parents ask us, so that *Baba Noel* can tell their child something like 'stop sucking your thumb,' or 'study well at school.'" The shop charges Eg\$10 pounds (\$3) for delivery.

El-Masry said he is a Moslem but makes an occasion of Christmas at his home. "Why shouldn't a Moslem make his children happy at the end of the year?" he said, laughing.

Police, politicians and drugs

A SCANDAL involving police, politicians, and mobsters widened yesterday with reports of the arrest of a drug courier who allegedly was delivering laundered money to police. Istanbul airport authorities earlier this week arrested, on drug charges, a 22-year-old woman who was carrying a suitcase stuffed with 28 billion Turkish lira (\$2.6 million) in foreign currency, the daily *Hurriyet* reported.

The woman, identified as Dilek Ornek, allegedly told authorities that she was a courier for a police officer, Ayhan Akca, bodyguard of the deputy head of the police's special forces department.

Reports said Ornek, holding Dutch and Turkish passports, had traveled to Turkey 58 times in the last year carrying money to be laundered.

Police, earlier this week, also

briefly detained Akca but let him go for lack of evidence, *Hurriyet* said. In November, Sedat Bucak, a legislator from a ruling party was hurt in a crash which killed a fugitive terrorist and a police chief. The fugitive was Abdullah Catli, who once led the Gray Wolves, a right-wing terrorist group, and who had been serving time in Switzerland for drug smuggling when he escaped in 1990.

Former Interior Minister Mehmet Agar, an ex-police chief himself, allegedly authorized false identification and an arms permit for Catli. Then it emerged that three bodyguards of lawmakers were implicated in the June murder of a casino magnate.

Hurriyet said yesterday that Akca, the police officer who allegedly received the drug money, also had links to Catli. (AP)

Algiers car bomb killed eight, newspapers say

A CAR bomb in Algiers on Monday killed eight people, Algerian newspapers reported yesterday, and one said the blast made a mockery of government claims to have gained the upper hand in its battle against Moslem rebels.

Security forces had put the toll at three dead and up to 20 wounded, but the Arab-language daily *Al Khabar*, quoting hospital sources, said "the number of dead reached eight and scores of people were seriously wounded." The leading French-language newspaper *El Watan*, well informed on security matters, quoted a police officer at the scene as saying that eight people died and many were wounded.

Al Khabar, *El Watan* and other newspapers blamed the blast on

Moslem guerrillas but there has been no claim of responsibility.

More than 1,400 civilians have died in bomb attacks by fundamentalist Moslem rebels in the past two years, according to a government human rights body. About 60,000 people have died in Algeria since 1992, when the authorities canceled a general election which radical Islamists were poised to win.

Monday's bomb ripped through the commercial Larbi Ben Mehidi Street, destroying a cafe and badly damaging a pizzeria and a betting office, witnesses said.

Newspapers said the explosion hit at lunch hour when the street was bustling with workers, street vendors and thousands of passers-by. The area is known for small fast-food restaurants and shops.

Liberte newspaper, reporting that the car used in the blast was stolen in the Moslem guerrillas' Eucalyptus district, south of Algiers, said the explosion made a mockery of authorities' claims of a crushing victory over the rebels.

El Watan, ridiculing the government over the security situation, wrote that "[Prime Minister] Ahmed Ouyahia walked in Tunis's streets and stated 'We triumphed over terrorism.'" Ouyahia was quoted on Sunday at the end of his visit to neighboring Tunisia as saying that the government had defeated the guerrillas and "terrorism is living its latest convulsive moment."

The Armed Islamic Group, the most ruthless of Algeria's fundamentalist movements, claimed responsibility. (AP)

No shooting at the wedding, please

KUWAIT'S Civil Aviation Authority says airplanes have had to change course to avoid being hit by gunfire from wedding celebrations held near the airport, a newspaper reported Monday.

The head of the authority, Sheikh Jaber Mubarak al-Ahmed al-Sabah, has asked the Interior Ministry to ban the celebrations, the *Al-Watan* newspaper said.

Shooting into the air is a traditional way for Beduin men to express joy, and the men-only wedding celebrations are usually held in tents erected for the occasion.

Sheikh Jaber said that late last

month, a Kuwait Airways flight and plane from an American carrier he did not name had to change course to avoid gunfire from a wedding party south of the airport. He said similar incidents had taken place before, and warned that this "could lead to disasters."

Possession of weapons is illegal in Kuwait, and the government has been cracking down on trigger-happy citizens.

However, many Kuwaitis have refused to hand in the guns acquired during the 1991 Iraqi occupation, saying they would need the weapons for self-protection if Saddam Hussein invaded again. (AP)

Spain to reactivate embassy in Iraq

SPAIN will send a diplomat to Baghdad in the next few weeks to reactivate its embassy in Iraq, authorities said yesterday.

The chargé d'affaires, who has yet to be named, will handle diplomatic and business relations with Iraq for the embassy, which has been inactive - but not closed - since the Gulf war in 1991, Foreign Ministry spokesman Innocencio Arias said.

Arias said there were no immediate plans to send an ambassador to Iraq.

Spain supported the US-led coalition against Iraq in the Gulf War, allowing US forces to use Spanish bases as stopovers during the war. (AP)

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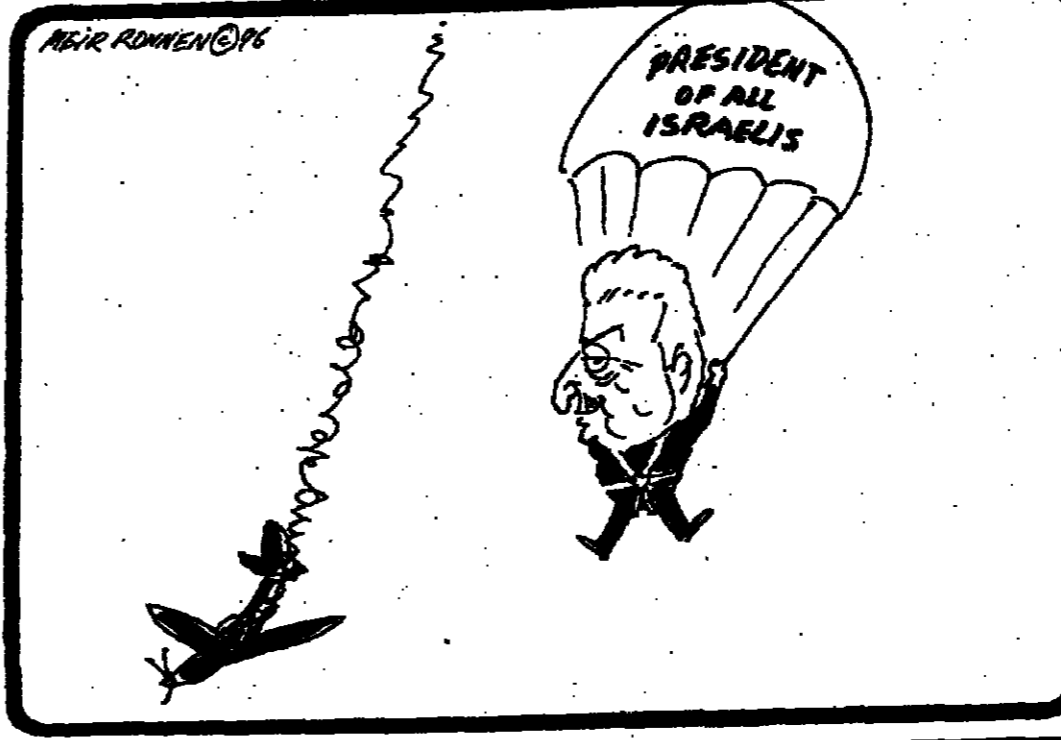
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Reciprocity Now

THE Hebron agreement seems to be finally reaching its conclusion. The details of the security arrangements are yet to be revealed, but in any case the endgame does not concern them for its essence is to sew together commitments toward the future that seek to fill the vacuum of trust between the parties.
Due to this lack of trust, the Palestinians have adamantly refused to create any window that would allow Israeli forces back into H-1, the 85 percent of Hebron that would come under Palestinian control. The Palestinians, however, need not rely on trust alone to ensure that Israel stays out, given the heavy political price Israel would pay for any such incursion, except under the most limited and extreme circumstances.

percent of the total territory outside the Green Line, but include about 68 percent of the Palestinian population. Gaining control over this area would be a great prize for Arafat, and one that gives him a strong incentive to ensure that Oslo continues to be implemented.
It is no surprise, therefore, that Arafat is seeking specific deadlines from Israel regarding further redeployments. This commitment is expected to be included in an exchange of side letters, either between the sides or with the United States.
Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu reportedly told Palestinian No. 2 Abu Mazen that the first further redeployment would be within "a few weeks," and that a date would be agreed upon with Arafat. Netanyahu also reportedly gave up his demand that in exchange, the Palestinians would provide a date for fulfilling their outstanding requirements under the agreement.



Trojan horse in Hebron

NEXT week will see the signing of a peace treaty. The parties formally burying the hatchet are the Guatemalan government and its armed revolutionary underground. Israel will be sending a special emissary, in lieu of President Weizman, who was officially invited but couldn't attend.
The invitation to Weizman expressed Guatemala's gratitude to Israel for having helped "tie the first knot" in negotiations with the rebels. The Guatemalans, impressed by the Oslo accords, in 1993 asked Israel to act as "match-maker" and appeal for Norwegian arbitration in Guatemala. This modest beginning eventually produced a peace agreement.

MOSHE ZAK

the Israeli and Palestinian teams, but he kept quiet about the night's dispatching of all the meetings' protocols to Egypt, enabling Egypt to hold the key to an agreement in its hand, as it were, giving or withholding consent depending on its own stunts in the matter.

Egyptian meddling in the talks could be the undoing of the accord

ability of including additional arbitrators in the effort to improve Netanyahu-Arafat relations, made it clear that Ross would just be hopping over from Jerusalem to Gaza, and not visiting other capitals. In response, Mubarak and Arafat accused Ross of bias toward Israel, Arafat even declaring his preference for Egyptian or European mediation.
The insult was clear. Yet after meeting with Arafat in Gaza, Ross informed Netanyahu that he would be going on to Cairo to fill Mubarak in on the talks.

the negotiations unthawed. What the Americans promised Egypt in exchange for removing its veto on an Arafat agreement with Netanyahu is still unknown. But there are a number of worrisome signs.
Spokesmen for the Palestinian negotiating team have announced that the agreement will be signed in Cairo; other Palestinian spokesmen promise that Egypt will be a partner in the signing of a US letter of assurance on continued redeployment - in other words, Israeli withdrawals.
Israel's consent to including Egypt in the negotiations would only burden its relations with the European Union, which also demands a role. Even more dangerous, every crisis with the Palestinians would automatically turn into a crisis with Egypt (even though the peace treaty with Egypt determines that it stands independent of other agreements).

Less is more

JACOB CHINITZ

ONE thing that has emerged from the brouhaha caused by President Weizman's outburst about gays is that you don't have to be religious to have a sexual moral code.
Some people have asked: Is a secular sexual morality possible? My answer is there had better be, or there will be no sexual morality at all.
For the theological-religious base for such a morality will satisfy only a relatively small number of fundamentalists and traditionalists who can counterpose their conscience and self-control to the pervasive sexual ambience of our culture. A 100 years of philosophy, art, movies and television have challenged us to achieve not sexual sanity, but a maximum of carnal satisfaction.
It is significant that today the only supporters of restraint appear to be religiousists, usually of the fundamentalist variety. This places the right-wing position under a tremendous handicap.
For while there is a degree of public consensus on health matters, for example, and on social phenomena like family violence and the exploitation of children, there is no consensus on God, Bible or religion.
It is futile to base a case against the distribution of condoms in schools, for instance, on God, because the opposition may simply not accept God, or your version of His will, or your interpretation of Scripture.
The great paradox in the situation is that the defense of the religious position must be made from a secular standpoint.
It was ever so. When Maimonides and other Jewish philosophers defended Judaism, the Torah and the commandments, they didn't argue that the will of God was on their side. That would have been then, and still is today, an enormous begging of the question.

A sensible sexual code for today's society can only be a 'secular' one

They had to rationalize the mitzvot, to show their utility and debate against a background of shared values, accepted axioms and self-evident propositions that their opponents couldn't dismiss as being one-sided and outside the consensus.

An old poison loses potency

DAVID J. LEVY

ON June 6, 1996, at the London, Ontario, convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, an audience of Lutheran leaders listened intently to a challenge by an Orthodox rabbi: how to move beyond the previous year's rejection of Luther's antisemitic diatribes into an area of greater Christian-Jewish rapprochement.
The presentation, which the bishop called "a historic event," later appeared in the regional Lutheran journal.
Yet just a few days earlier, at the Southern Baptist Conversion in New Orleans, a resolution was passed affirming Baptist resolve to press forward with efforts to convert the Jews.

DAVID J. LEVY

tion classical christology, ecclesiology, or biblical passages and their exegesis.
This as prominent a thinker as Dr. John T. Pawlikowski has written that "the enrichment and insight I have received from living contact with Jews and Judaism has given me new religious meaning and... forced upon me a profound reevaluation of traditional claims of Christian superiority and universality."
Dr. R. Kendall Soulen, of Washington D.C.'s Wesley Theological Seminary, recently added: "Christians should acknowledge that God's history with Israel and the nations is the permanent and enduring medium of God's work as the Consummator of human creation..."

have no longer been replaced by a "new" Testament. Rather, both populations coexist side by side, both harmoniously attempting to bring God's dream world a little closer to reality.
How should Jews respond to the above? First, in so far as missionaries are concerned this recent immigrant sees no reason why proselytizing should not be a crime punishable by deportation.
Every democracy places limits on the right to freedom of speech; and in the light of 17 centuries of malevolent Christian-Jewish relations, exemplified by frustrated attempts at proselytizing and the consequences thereof, the contemporary Jewish democracy called Israel would be well within its rights to outlaw proselytizing.
Second, as regards the good news, whether single covenant or double, I say a blessing on both their heads!
Minimally, Jews should respond with patience and serious appreciation of the evolution that is occurring. Seventeen centuries of abuse has also, understandably, made us quite impatient. But our impatience is often more impediment than encouragement.
So too our cynicism. The fact of the matter is that many Christians believe we Jews are fine just as we are. Yes, the changes are real, and the new attitudes are trickling down - or, perhaps better, percolating up.
Finally, we should make an effort to know our Christian neighbors. If they are still in the theological dark ages, busy handing out pamphlets to Jews, appropriate responses ought to be considered.
But if they're an courtant with contemporary trends in Christian thought a hearty and sincere Merry Christmas is certainly in order.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SCHOOL SUBJECTS

Sir, - Susan Bellos hit the nail on the head in her article on education of November 24. She said that the most important subjects our pupils should study are world history and literature. And it is just these subjects that are downplayed or firmly rejected in many of our schools. In the haredi schools, these subjects are completely outlawed, and in many of the other religious schools, only Jewish history of a sort is taught, and world history is brought in occasionally as a background to Jewish history.

WRITING ON THE WALL

Sir, - Letter after letter in your pages warns of the coming catastrophe if Israel fulfills the Oslo Accords to the letter.
Arafat has broken the accords by not abrogating the Palestine Covenant calling for the destruction of Israel, by killing Israeli soldiers in an unprovoked attack, not handing over killers and creating safe havens for terrorists, just to mention a few instances, thus making a mockery of the accords and invalidating them according to international law.
I hope and pray that Prime Minister Netanyahu will not become yet another Peres with his "New Middle East" dreams.

NAIVE

Sir, - Shimon Peres's reaction to the Beit El murders is rather naive. According to him the Palestinian Authority should "do everything it can to find and catch the terrorists and either try them or turn them over to us."
The "either - or" is ridiculous. The PA never turned over murderers to Israel and has already declared that it will not do so this time either. As to the trial (if the terrorists are really caught), it is completely meaningless, since they will be released from jail after a few weeks and will most probably join the PA police, as happened in many other similar cases.

KOPUL ROSEN

Sir, - Monday March 17 is Rabbi Kopul Rosen's 35th yahrzeit. We, his children, would like to invite all Old Carmelites and friends to an evening of reminiscence in his honor.
The event will be held at Yakar, 10 Halamed Hei, Katamon, Jerusalem (Yakar is his Hebrew acronym).
In order to ensure the success of the evening, would you please fax or write us with the names and addresses of any Old Carmelites or friends who you think would be interested in joining us.

DEALING WITH PAIN

Sir, - Your editorial of December 9 touched the agonizing subject of pain. It is all very well to put the rationale of not dealing with pain on educating the doctors, the patients and the authorities. All these reasons take time and, meanwhile, the patients and their families suffer. If the doctors really want to help, the first thing they should do is to listen carefully to what their patients have to say. Secondly, they should be prepared to accept help from patients who have had to cope with pain in similar situations and who are now willing to help others.
I know that there are doctors who excuse themselves, because of lack of time, resources, or because they have to get permission from this one or that one... I am afraid to say that, had they or any immediate member of their family experienced excruciating pain, they would resolve to find something to help their patients and cut through any obstacle, bureaucratic or otherwise, that would stand in their way. And that is what they should do for their patients today, not tomorrow. Have the courage to get outside help; your patients would look upon it as strength and not as weakness.

AN ISRAELI T-SHIRT

Sir, - On my last visit to Israel, I brought home gifts for my friends. On Thanksgiving day, one of the recipients, a Catholic Polish teacher, who supplements her income working in an Italian restaurant, came to offer her holiday greetings.
She proudly displayed her Israeli T-shirt with the picture of Jerusalem and told me that since she was wearing the shirt, her tips doubled.

CRIMINALLY RESPONSIBLE

Sir, - Jerusalem's Deputy Mayor, Shmuel Meir, has become another in the list of Israeli cit-

CRIMINALLY RESPONSIBLE

responsible in the death of Shmuel Meir, who has left eight children and a widow.

Isr wit Je

EL



De Mayo: Everyone can see their own Jesus

Israeli architect wins bid to erect Jesus in Sicily

AMY KLEIN

JESUS is coming in the year 2000, and guess what? A Jew is bringing him. The Jew is Israeli architect David de Mayo, and his Jesus is a 51-meter statue that he is building in Sicily for the next millennium.

De Mayo's bid was part of a year-long competition for the project. His design was chosen from eight world-renowned architects, including Frank Gehry, the Austrian Hans Hollein, Dutch Van Berkel and Italian Thomasso Valle.

The statue is the vision of Sicilian Father Luigi Far Lauto, who has run a village for autistic children for the past 30 years. It is part of his plan for an "open city" which will include universities, libraries, and facilities to integrate autistic people in a community, to give them, in Far Lauto's words, "the honor they deserve in our world."

Far Lauto hosts international conferences on autism and helps children and the professionals who treat them from all over the world. He hopes that the statue, which will be the tallest Jesus in the world, will attract one million out of the eight million tourists expected in Rome during the year 2000.

Two meters taller than the Statue of Liberty, the Jesus complex will also allow visitors to go to the top and see the view from the Toraia mountain top. But, instead of 99

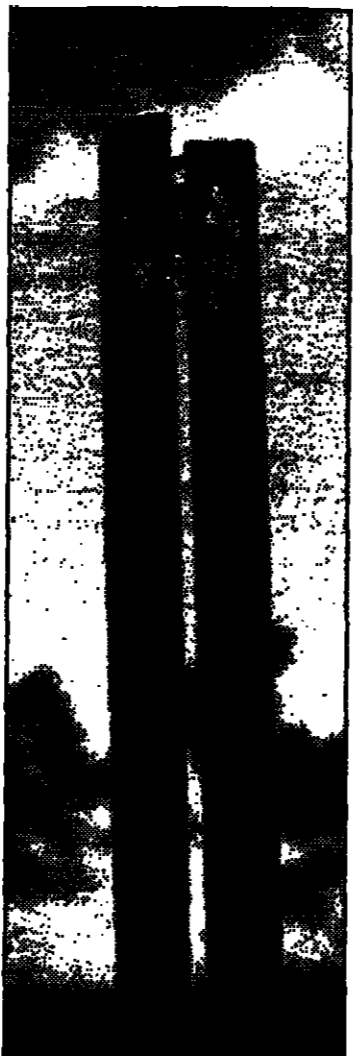
steps, there will be elevators from inside the base, which will be a Catholic church from which the statue stems. Below the church, extending 20 meters underground, will be a pantheon - a meeting place for all religions.

And that's not all: In addition to Jesus, and the church and pantheon, the statue will serve as a satellite. From a hidden dish on top of the structure, a dish will send out programs of a religious nature.

"The statue will be like a great big antenna that will broadcast to the world the positive in it, to give a different view of the world," says Far Lauto. "That is the way the messiah teaches us. The statue is the message."

How does the Jewish designer of this gargantuan message feel about bringing Jesus to millions? "It's a bit strange," de Mayo concedes, "but my job as an architect is to create aesthetic, functional answers according to the needs of the program."

De Mayo's Jesus - unlike other entries - is more symbolic looking than literal. The church/Jesus stands at 51 meters according to the father's request, in order to represent "Jesus' partnership - 51 percent to man's 49." Three tall columns symbolize the Trinity; they will be made from everlasting titanium to represent the eternity of Jesus. At the top of the pillars will be a 10 meter circumference see-through orb - Jesus' head, from there will be the observation point, so that, as de Mayo



De Mayo's statue will be the tallest Jesus in the world.

explained to the judges panel, "people can see the world through Jesus' eyes."

"I turned [the observation deck] towards Jerusalem," de Mayo says of his own ideological additions to the design. "Whoever looks at it is looking at the crossroads for all the religions."

De Mayo does not believe in Jesus, but he thinks that in his abstract complex "everyone can see their own Jesus."

De Mayo is most well known here for designing the Habimah Theater, and most recently Tel Aviv's municipality buildings.

De Mayo was born in Spain in 1932, and moved to Israel in 1948. He left to study architecture in Sweden, and has designed projects around the world, including the interiors of the Hilton hotels in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Antigua in the Caribbean.

This is the first time an Israeli architect has won an international competition, de Mayo says. It is also probably the last thing the world expected: A Jew resurrecting Jesus.

Bethlehem: 'Tis the season...

YOCHI DREAZEN

Many Israeli tour guides tell a popular story to explain how tourism to Bethlehem has changed since it came under the control of the Palestinian Authority last year.

A Catholic priest, leading a large group of Christian pilgrims on a tour of Bethlehem's many holy sites, was stopped at the entrance to the Church of the Nativity by a Palestinian policewoman who asked him for his tour guide's license. The priest, somewhat indignantly, pointed to his Roman collar, and asked, "Isn't this enough?"

The policewoman, the story goes, shook her head. "In the Vatican, that might be enough," she explained. "Here, we want to see a license! Your group can go in. You stay outside."

The guides point to such stories as symbolic of the strange mix of heavy-handedness and efficiency which has come to the city since last December, when Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, in an infamous speech to thousands of worshippers in Manger Square, welcomed them to the "birthplace of the first Palestinian, Jesus Christ."

In addition to stringently enforced regulations requiring that all tour guides have valid licenses before they are allowed to enter any of the sites - something which is almost unheard of in Israel - the guides point to the police's success in getting rid of pushy, obnoxious vendors.

The thing that impresses me the most is how the police have gotten rid of the scam artists and peddlers who used to almost attack tourists as soon as they stepped off their buses," said Robert Brender, who has been leading tours since 1981. "Now, all the vendors are licensed and act very politely so as not to attract the attention of the police."

Brender added that he often thinks back to pre-Intifada Bethlehem, when many Israelis used to shop and eat there on the weekends. "I used to drive there for Friday night dinner," he said. "Those types of visits, unfortunately, went down the drain with the Intifada. And they still haven't come back."

Nir Ophir, who has been leading Austrian and German pilgrims on tours of the city for the last 12 years, said that Israelis will probably not return to Bethlehem as anything

other than tourists. "I think they've accepted the fact that Bethlehem is part of a different entity," he explained. "It's not going to become another Abu Ghosh."

Many of the guides disagreed, however, as to whether or not the overall Palestinian impact on the city's tourism had been positive. Jerusalem-based tour guide Amnon Aronson said that it has been negative. "Tourism is down heavily since they [the Palestinians] took over," he said. "Its sort of sad, because the whole city grew rich on tourism, but now we just take the tourists in on their buses, out to the Church [of the Nativity], and then back on the buses to leave. No one walks around to see or shop in the rest of the city anymore."

Mishi Neubach, who has been leading tours of the city since 1970, disagrees. "From a tourist's point of view, Bethlehem has become a much nicer place to visit," he said. "A lot of Israelis are stuck in a mindset of fear, believing that was true three years ago [about security in the city] is still true today. They don't realize that most of the changes are for the better: The city is cleaner, safer, and more efficient."

ALMOST no Palestinian flags are visible from the main road. "Bethlehem's never really been much of a PLO town," explains my guide, Micha Ashkenazi. "It's a tourist town, which really yearns to be left out of politics altogether."

The feeling here is that things will work out politically, so people feel safe investing," said Ashkenazi, a former archeologist who has been a tour guide since 1967. "There's a lot of hope for the future."

The Church of the Nativity is the oldest, continuously-functioning church in the world, originally built in the 4th century A.D. While the church's interior features stunning mosaics, most tourists flock to the underground cave, accessible from within the church, which tradition says is the birthplace of Christ. The exact spot of his birth is marked by a beautiful, 14-pointed silver star, the stealing of which, Ashkenazi said, led to the Crimean War.

On the way out of the church, Ashkenazi points to the church and then to a large mosque across the street. "The only thing missing is a synagogue," Ashkenazi jokes. "Then again, the only thing Jewish here is Christ."



Bethlehem prepares for its big day. The city yearns to be left out of politics altogether

Christian tourist influx expected

"Lord of History, dispose our spirits to celebrate with faith the Great Jubilee of 2000, so that it might be a year of grace and mercy," declared Pope John Paul II last month, as he formally launched a three-year program within the Roman Catholic Church, to prepare for the celebrations of the 2000th birthday of Jesus. This, along with the simultaneous release, in Vatican City, of 450,000 copies of a stamp series entitled "Toward the Holy Year," could only have lit up the smiles on the faces of Israel's tourist industry. Tourist operators here are aiming to make the most of the jubilee's 2000th anniversary.

2000 celebrations, to which the Vatican alone is expected to entice about 15 million of the 35 million Christian tourists expected to visit Israel that year.

However, in the lead-up to the celebrations, for which the Israeli tourist industry is preparing fastidiously, international Christian groups and Palestinian Christians are appalled by the recent rejection by the Supreme Court of a petition aiming to block the construction of Har Homa, a neighborhood of some 6,500 units, and which, due to its proximity to Bethlehem, will allow for the growth of an

alternative tourist center for the 2000 celebrations.

"Israel's development of the Har Homa complex will effectively co-opt Bethlehem's tourist economy," says Jennifer Moorehead, a Jerusalem-based land researcher. Moorehead claims that Israeli planners are "scrambling to capitalize on 'Bethlehem 2000,'" by developing luxury hotels, souvenir shops, and craft industries in Har Homa. Currently, there are around 300 hotel rooms in Bethlehem, but this is expected to rise 10-fold by the year 2000.

Daniel J. Chaflan

Coping with transition

PARENTING
RUTH MASON

To prepare my young children for a new experience or transition, such as going on vacation, starting preschool, the birth of a sibling or staying with Grandma for the weekend without us, I make small, stapled paper books that explain and illustrate what is about to happen.

You don't have to be an artist or a writer to make "transition books" for your children. I write one or two sentences per page and illustrate with photographs or pictures cut out from magazines (art is not my strength). When I feel ambitious, I cover them with clear contact paper. The books allow my children to have some control over the experience, to know what to expect and to anticipate the sequence in which new things will happen.

In *Iliana's Trip Book*, written before my then two-year-old daughter's first cross-country vacation (we were still living in the US), I wrote: "...California is far away. We live in a place called New York. Grandma lives in a place called Long Island. It's far, so we drive there in the car. California is even farther. So we'll fly there in an airplane. Way up in the sky. Like the birds..." In California, we'll visit Uncle Leon and Aunt Ellen and cousin Tamir. We'll stay in their house and go

swimming in their pool."

I make sure to stress the positive aspects of what is about to happen, but also acknowledge difficult feelings they might have: "We'll miss our friends in New York. But we'll see them when we come back from our vacation."

Knowing that routines and familiarity are reassuring to children, I include things that will remain the same: "Iliana and Yosef will sleep in cribs in the same room. Mommy and Daddy will sleep in a bed in the next room."

My children loved these books, and asked for them again and again before a change or transition in their lives. But in addition to helping my children, the books helped me. Creating them is fun and knowing I am doing something concrete to help my kids feel secure is very satisfying.

How to do it:
1. Write your "story" on a sheet of paper. Keep the sentences simple and include what is familiar to your child as well as what will be new. Describe what will happen in order, if possible. Use your children's names.
2. Fold four (or five or six if you

want a longer book) pieces of stiff paper in half width-wise and staple twice along the fold. Copy your story with colored markers using a sentence or two per page, leaving room for pictures.

3. Tape appropriate photos or pictures cut out from magazines onto each page, or every other page, or, if you are so inclined, draw pictures to illustrate.

4. Cover with clear contact paper and you have a lasting treasure - something that will help your children now and will act as a memory book later.

5. Remember - the book was written by you about your children. They are sure to love it.

CORRECTION

Due to an editing error, a passage in last week's Parenting column was incorrect. It should have read: Children establish left-right dominance between the ages of three and five years, and complete body awareness between five and seven years.

ILLNESS PREVENTED Israel Philharmonic Orchestra patron and IPO board member Lola Beer-Ebner from attending the opening concert of the IPO's 60th anniversary festivities, sponsored by controversial philanthropist Josef Buchman. But Beer-Ebner, who herself is sponsoring tonight's concert, was enormously cheered by the messages of affection penned to her on the elaborate souvenir program which reportedly struck an emotional chord.

Initiated by World WIZO honorary president Raya Jaglom, the autographed program became an instant collectors' item with signatures including Zabin Mehta, Itzhak Perlman, Roni Milo and Shimon Peres.

GOVERNMENT ministers last week indulged in a little playful revenge at the expense of Broadcasting Authority director-general Motti Kirschenbaum, who had come to plead against a proposed NIS 50 million cut in the

GRAPEVINE
GREER FAY CASHMAN

IBA budget. Kirschenbaum was just getting to the main point of his argument when Prime Minister Binyamina Netanyahu told him that his time had expired. Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi, taking his cue from the boss, said "I'm sorry, but it's time for a commercial," and Education Minister Ze'evulun Hammer chimed in "and now we'll pause for a news update."

Other government ministers who have frequently been cut off the air in mid-sentence took equal pleasure in giving Kirschenbaum a collective dose of the IBA's own medicine. "It may be difficult for you to listen to what you're always saying to us," admonished Netanyahu as he deferred the discussion to another session.

MANY RIGHT-wing American immigrants are furious with US

Ambassador Martin Indyk for what they regard as stepping beyond the bounds of diplomacy. Indyk, who last week appeared with Roni Milo at a peace gathering at the home of sculptress Ilana Goor, made some rather uncompromising, albeit off-the-record, remarks about Israel's foot-dragging on the Hebron issue. Several right-wingers were heard to say afterwards that it was inexcusable behavior for any foreign diplomat in his host country, but for a diplomat who is also Jewish to talk that way in Israel is also unforgivable.

IN ADDITION to the fire tree growing in her garden and the one sent with season's greetings by the Foreign Ministry, Narassy Kröll brought in a tree from her husband's native Austria. Although she is a Cambodian Buddhist, the wife of the Catholic Austrian

ambassador loves Christmas, and what she loves most about the holiday is decorating the tree.

THEY'VE BEEN around long enough not to be fooled by some glib-tongued con merchant, but both Marlon Brando and Jack Nicholson let their libidos cloud their judgment when a smooth-talking rogue persuaded them to invest \$6 million in a health club with bubble, bare-breasted waitresses. Needless to say, the man and the money have disappeared and the two horny old actors have been left with egg on their faces.

FORMER CHILD star Tatum O'Neal keeps trying to kick the habit, but drug and alcohol abuse keep getting the better of her. O'Neal, who has now checked into a \$1,000 a day rehab clinic, has been addicted since she was knee high to a grasshopper, and blames her father, actor Ryan O'Neal, who she says introduced her to narcotics.

CALLING ALL YOU HANDICRAFTERS

The Jerusalem Post Pessah Handicrafts Fair will take place on Wednesday, April 25, 1997, at the Ramana Sports Center, next to Metro West High School.

If you create top quality handicrafts and wish to book a stand at the fair, please contact Bevezee Black, Director of The Jerusalem Post Funds, Tel. 02-625-3986.

All proceeds from the fair will help Israel's needy children, the elderly and new immigrants.

BIBLE LANDS MUSEUM JERUSALEM

SATURDAY NIGHT CONCERT

Violin & Piano Concert

Emil Israel Chudnovski - violin
Allan Sternfeld - piano

Performing works by: Beethoven, Debussy, and Kreisler.

December 28
Concert at 20:30
Wine and Cheese at 20:00

Admission NIS 35; Museum members, olim, students, soldiers & seniors NIS 30.
Proceeds benefit The Jerusalem Post Funds.

Next concert, January 4: "An Evening of Meditative Music"
Christian Dangle - Gong, Yael Acher - Flute

25 Grant St. Jerusalem, Tel. 02-5811066

PEOPLE OF THE SEA

Thanks to the work of Trude and Moshe Dothan, the Philistines, one of the most maligned peoples of ancient history, are shown in a completely different light. This first popular account presents a highly developed civilization advanced in art and culture, architecture, and commerce. Handsomely illustrated with line drawings, photographs and maps, the book interweaves a fascinating history of the Philistines with first person experiences of archaeologists at work. Hardcover, 276 pp. Macmillan.

JP Price: NIS 65
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To: Books, The Jerusalem Post, POB 81, Jerusalem 91000 • Tel. 02-6241282

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Drive slower! Drive with care!

BUSINESS & FINANCE

Wednesday, December 25, 1996

Dovrat-Shrem raise additional \$32m. for Polaris Fund

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

THE Dovrat Shrem Group has raised an additional \$32 million in the US, completing the second round of funding of the Polaris II venture-capital fund...

Women attack gov't retreat on tax benefits

DAVID HARRIS

WOMEN yesterday attacked the Treasury's plan to reduce tax credits for married, working women by half a point, bringing their tax burden in line with men's.

young families in which both partners have to work.

Blumenthal accused the Treasury of picking an easy political target. "When we are a politically weak grouping, it is easy to take advantage of us," she said.

he said. "Women are entitled to a debate on the issue before this nighttime hijacking was imposed on them."

The Treasury maintains now is the time to bring women's taxes in line with those of their male colleagues. "Given there is no reason for a distinction in the calculation of income to the taxpayer according to sex, it is time to correct this discrimination," said a Finance Ministry statement published Monday night.

The Treasury argues that 62 percent of women will not be affected by the change, because they do not receive a high enough wage. Currently, a woman with two children only begins paying tax on the first shekel earned over NIS 3,638.

day's deliberations on the Budgetary Arrangements bill, the Knesset Finance Committee and the Treasury agreed to a total NIS 7.2 billion cuts in the 1997 budget.

This final total was reached after the Treasury realized it would need to cut this much to get to its desired budget-deficit target of 2.8% of GDP.

The original Treasury proposal in July was to cut NIS 4.9b, and this was followed on December 9 by a request for an additional NIS 1.8b cut, making a total of NIS 6.7 total.

The various last minute additions and alterations to the proposals were not just to make up for the various sections rejected by the Knesset Finance Committee, such as reductions in child benefit allowances and the levying of doctors fees, but also to raise the extra NIS 500m. needed to reach NIS 7.2b.

Led by Likud MK Naomi Blumenthal, who called the decision "an act of injustice," various women's organizations condemned the last minute decision, which the Treasury says will bring an additional NIS 270m. in revenue.

The Israel Women's Network expressed its fury at the decision, and particularly the Treasury's reference to existing "discrimination" in favor of women. "The original intention of a whole credit point was to compensate families for the economic burden placed on them after the passing of the National Health Insurance Law," said director Lesley Sachs.

Histadrut chairman Amir Peretz joined the criticism. "It is impossible to compare this attack on all working women in Israel, with the taxation on cigarettes and gasoline,"

Meanwhile, at the end of two



A Belarusian specialist finishes a new church bell at a workshop in Minsk. The only company of its kind in Belarus, the workshop is now receiving orders from monasteries and churches destroyed under the Soviet regime.

Turbowicz: Direct Insurance, Leumi should have separate boards

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

ANTITRUST Authority director-general Dr. Yoram Turbowicz intends to subject Bank Leumi's prospective purchase of 20 percent of Direct Insurance to a number of conditions, intended to maintain market competition and prevent conflicts of interest, a Ministry of Industry and Trade source said yesterday.

directly to customers.

Following the companies' announcement of the proposed transaction approximately two months ago, Turbowicz launched an inquiry into the implications of the sale, according to sources.

Turbowicz is mainly concerned that Bank Leumi's control of 20% of Israeli insurance leader Migdal, and its purchase of Direct Insurance, the leading company in the direct insurance market, would hinder market competition.

Migdal controls about 25% of the local insurance sector, while Direct Insurance controls about 5% of the market.

Among others, Turbowicz intends to subject the transaction to total separation of Bank Leumi's and Direct Insurance's managements, including a prohibition to employ any director on both boards.

Bank Leumi said there is no legal reason for Turbowicz to object to the transaction. "In our opinion the transaction will go ahead. We don't see any problem," said a Bank Leumi spokesperson.

Porush attacks Treasury proposals for foreign labor

DAVID HARRIS

A COMMITTEE's recommendation to cut benefits to foreign workers, in fact, would cost the construction industry NIS 170 million to NIS 200m., and the cost to the agriculture sector would be NIS 80m., deputy Construction and Housing Minister Meir Porush and Agriculture Ministry

director-general Danny Kritchman said yesterday.

The committee, headed by the Treasury's Tsipi Galyam, this week proposed a variety of measures aimed at reducing benefits and increasing costs for foreign workers and their employers. The measures will bring some NIS 100m. to government coffers, according to Galyam, the Treasury's head of Economic Research and State Revenue Administration.

Porush, however, said he will fight the proposals in the cabinet. "The Galyam committee attempted to solve one problem, but is creating another larger one," he said. Foreign workers are currently keeping the building industry together, he said.

"The recommendations are also likely to cause a reduction in the number of building startups. This foolishness must be rejected," Porush said. This will inevitably have a knock-on effect on apartment prices, he said.

While Porush opposes the

employment of foreigners, he acknowledged there is little choice at the moment. It is also wrong that they face difficulties in attempting to extend their work permits, with the government reducing the number available from next year.

Meanwhile, Kritchman said, "We will not pay the new tax on foreign workers in agriculture. This is destruction of farming and farmers, an unnecessary expenditure of NIS 80m."

Finance Ministry spokesman Eli Yosef would not respond to Porush's and Kritchman's comments, saying the Galyam committee is only one of four making recommendations to the ministerial committee on foreign workers led by Labor and Social Affairs Minister Eli Yishai. "It is up to Yishai's ministry to consider the proposals," said Yosef.

Labor and Social Affairs spokesman Zvi Rosen quickly passed the buck back from whence it came. "I suggest you speak to Eli Yosef and Tsipi Galyam about this," Rosen said.

Texaco to sell chemical unit for \$600m.

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Texaco Inc. said yesterday it would sell a gasoline additive business to Huntsman Corp. for about \$600 million, the last of a string of sales of chemical businesses.

The unit being sold makes ethers used to help reduce auto exhaust pollutants and is located next to Huntsman facilities at Port Neches, Texas, Texaco said. Huntsman has operated the plant for Texaco since operations began there in August 1994.

MTBE is added to gasoline to help reduce carbon monoxide emissions, making it burn more cleanly, as well as to increase octane. MTBE has been used to reduce smog and attain mandated air quality standards in certain regions of the US under the Clean Air Act of 1990.

"This is the last major step in the sale of Texaco's chemical business and is in keeping with our plans to focus on our core oil and gas business," Texaco Chairman Peter Bijur said in a statement.

Gov't to float 17-20 percent of Discount in February

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

MI Holdings, the state firm in charge of selling government companies, intends to issue 12 percent to 17% of Bank Discount's shares at the end of February, the bank's underwriters said yesterday.

The government hopes to raise an immediate NIS 100 million to NIS 150m. on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange by issuing options to buy shares at a later date.

the bank's market price. It is not yet clear whether the package of options will include shares, said one of the lead underwriters.

Clal Issuers, IBI, Leader Issues and Eyal Securities, the lead underwriters for the offering, received a detailed, written description of the bank's operations several days ago from Bank Discount. In the meantime, Bank Discount and the under-

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Russia's Technology and Science Minister Vladimir Fortov once again has invited Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky to visit Russia. Sharansky postponed his visit to Russia last month following the death of his wife's brother, Col. (res.) Michael Shuglitz. It now is expected Sharansky will travel to Russia towards the end of January.

Trucks will be allowed to travel door to door between Israel and Jordan from January 1, the Customs and VAT Authority announced this week. Until now, drivers have been forced to unload their vehicles at the border for a thorough inspection before a second truck from the other side of the border took the goods to their final destination.

This system will operate at the Arava and Jordan River crossing points, which will be open to goods traffic from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the winter and from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. in the summer.

Construction on the Kesem interchange of the Trans-Israel highway has begun, Cross Israel Highway Ltd., said this week. Kesem, which will include Israel's longest bridge at 630 meters, will take two-and-a-half years to construct, before it links trans-Israel Route 6 with the trans-Samaria Route 5 highway and the Rosh Ha'ayin-Jaljala route 444.

The design of the interchange could allow for the future construction of a rail link with a park and ride facility.

The Israel Flower Board has received the gold medal for its display area at the international flower festival exhibition held recently at Aalsmeer in the Netherlands. The stand's theme was Jerusalem 3000. The prizewinning display will be on view at the spring 1997 flower show in the Hefer Valley.

Karmiel has become the first Israeli city to be awarded ISO 9002 status by the Standards Institute, and consequently becomes the country's first local authority with a chartermark for quality of service.

A celebratory ceremony was held in the city today, with Interior Minister Eli Shussan in attendance.

Just under 4,000 new apartments were sold in the private sector in the third quarter, 14 percent fewer than in the same period last year, the Central Bureau of Statistics announced yesterday. However, the figure (3,930) was 11% higher than that in the second quarter. These statistics are based on sales in Israel's 24 largest cities.

Telshot Israel Mortgage Bank's provident funds have recently invested NIS 45 million in real estate, representing five percent of the bank's total assets. The bank invested in two large properties: an office building in Tel Aviv and the Zion Cables plot in Rishon LeZion.

Minister says Kuwait plans no foreign borrowing: Kuwait, having recently repaid the last installment on \$5.5 billion of foreign loans, does not plan to borrow abroad again.

Rodhan, who is on an official visit to Syria, said Kuwait had to seek foreign loans after the 1991 Gulf War, because the country's reserves were depleted.

"We only (borrowed) \$5.5b. and we were able to repay the last installment of \$800m. recently, thus ending our foreign debt," he said.

"The repayment of the loans reflects the strength of our economy and shows the normal financial conditions which existed before the ugly Iraqi invasion of Kuwait have been restored."

Teva estimates potential Copaxone sales at \$100m.

JENNIFER FRIEDLIN

TEVA Pharmaceutical Industries' Copaxone, a multiple-sclerosis drug that recently received approval from the US Food and Drug Administration, is expected to generate \$100 million in sales next year, a senior company source said yesterday.

The drug, which is designed to treat people suffering from the relapsing-remitting form of the debilitating central-nervous disease, will be available in the US in early 1997.

Analysts estimate that the international market for MS drugs has the potential to reach between \$billion and \$4b, adding that Copaxone sales could eventually total between \$200m and \$300m. Some 750,000 people worldwide have

MS, with 130,000 in the US and about 5,000 in Israel. About 30% of all MS patients have the relapsing-remitting form of the disease.

Trading in Teva's Nasdaq-traded shares jumped \$0.25 to close at \$44.687 yesterday, following the FDA's approval.

The drug will be marketed in the US by Teva Marion Partners, a joint effort between Teva and Hoechst Marion Roussel, a subsidiary of Germany's Hoechst AG.

The treatment is expected to cost between \$7,000 and \$10,000 a year. The Israeli Health Ministry has not yet said if Copaxone, which was approved here last month, will be included in the basket of subsidized drugs.

CORRECTION

BANK Carmel has gained control of Maritime Bank, and not as reported here yesterday. We regret the error.

ISRAELI MONEY MARKETS

Table with columns: Currency deposit (for), 3 MONTHS, 6 MONTHS, 12 MONTHS. Rows include U.S. dollar, Pound sterling, German mark, Swiss franc, Yen.

Shekel Foreign Exchange Rates* (24.12.96)

Table with columns: CURRENCY AND TRANSFERS, BANKNOTES, Rep. Rates. Rows include U.S. dollar, German mark, French franc, Japanese yen, Dutch florin, Swiss franc, Swedish krona, Norwegian krona, Danish krona, Finnish mark, Canadian dollar, Australian dollar, S. African rand, Belgian franc, Austrian schilling, Italian lire, Jordanian dinar, Egyptian pound, Irish punt.

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Advertisement for securities. Text: Want to keep in close touch with your securities till 11 PM? Image of a person holding a briefcase.

Key Representative Rates
US Dollar NIS 3.2660 -0.82%
Sterling NIS 5.4686 -0.23%
Mark NIS 2.1018 -0.18%

NYSE STOCK MARKETS
New York market indexes
DJ Industrial Last Change
DJ Transport 8929.85 +0.89

NYSE stocks
Unchanged Advances Declines
Advances 458 1298 506

Other stock market indexes
FTSE 100 Last Change
FTSE 100 4084.4 -0.4

Israeli stocks in US
NYSE / AMEX / NASDAQ / OTC
Last Change
Ain To Pny 41.25 +0.85

LIBOR RATES
Last Change
3 months 4.75 +0.05
6 months 4.75 +0.05
12 months 4.75 +0.05

Foreign financial data courtesy of
CommStock Trading Ltd.
Futures, Options, Stocks, Bonds and Mutual Funds

US commodities
Last Change
Cocoa (Mar) 1388 -2
Coffee (Mar) 114.25 +0.12

London commodities
Last Change
Cocoa (Mar) 1388 -2
Coffee (Mar) 114.25 +0.12

Spot market metals (US)
Last Change
Copper 95.80 +0
Gold 354.50 +0

New York metal futures
Last Change
Copper 95.80 +0
Gold 354.50 +0

London metal fixes
Last Change
Gold 354.50 +0
Silver 4.45 +0

TEL AVIV STOCKS

Multi-sided trading Two-sided trading
Name Price Change % Volume Price Change % Volume
Aishrac 437 2.2 7000 1828 1.0 3425

ISRAEL DISCOUNT BANK

INTERNATIONAL STOCK PRICES

NEW YORK
Airtel 28.75 +0
Alcoa 28.75 +0
Amgen 28.75 +0

Shares gain, led by small, medium stocks

TEL AVIV STOCK MARKET
DAN GERSTENFELD
211.03 +0.46%
219.36 +0.35%

Shares closed higher yesterday, led by a rise in medium- and small-capitalization stocks, traders said. The Two-sided index rose 0.45 percent or 0.94 points, to 211.03 on all-share turnover of NIS 100 million, compared to NIS 98m. Monday. The Maof index gained 0.35% to 219.36.

London shares set another closing high

London (Reuters) - London shares rang up their third consecutive record close yesterday, but trading across the rest of Europe was featureless with many dealers finishing early for the Christmas holiday and German markets already shut. London's FTSE 100 index ended a truncated session 5.3 points higher at 4,092.5 after muted activity, just 7.5 points below its record intra-day high reached last Friday and with some traders predicting a January rally.

Dow index gains in short session

NEW YORK (AP) - Stocks drifted mostly higher yesterday, led by technology bellwethers and other blue-chip issues in predictably quiet trading during a shortened pre-Christmas session. The Dow Jones industrial average gained 33.83 points to close at 6,522.85. The technology-laden Nasdaq market shot higher over the last half hour as bargain hunters bid up some computer-related issues that had dipped on profit-taking.

MORDECHAI

(Continued from Page 1) The chemistry between Mordechai and the Egyptians turned out to be so good, defense officials said, that Mordechai held an unplanned, hour-long meeting with Tantawi, the first between Israeli and Egyptian defense ministers since Yitzhak Rabin was in Egypt in 1989. The Egypt we saw today is not the Egypt of yesterday," one Defense Ministry official said. Speaking in a mixture of Arabic and English, Mordechai and Mubarak emerged from their lunch as what appeared to be best of friends, holding hands and smiling. "More than once we held hands and chatted in Arabic and English, and with our body language and eye movements, I found a very interesting man who is for the continuation of the peace process," Mordechai said, adding that military relations, which have slackened off since the late 1980s, would be strengthened between the two defense establishments. "Mubarak said to forget about any war. Take that word 'war' out of your lexicon," Mordechai said. Remnants of war are still visible at the bombed out military runway at Hurgada airport, the site of many IAF bombing raids. Since the peace treaty, however, the tiny fishing village southwest of Sharm el-Sheikh is today a bustling tourist resort with over a million visitors a year. For Mordechai, it was a particularly moving visit. The last time he was on Egyptian soil was on deep penetration raids in the early 1970s as a paratroop battalion commander. His battalion was decimated during the Yom Kippur War in the battle for Chinese Farm. Nearby, Tantawi commanded a battalion that also suffered heavy losses. "We both have very difficult memories from that time. To come back here and meet as two defense ministers who are looking for ways to strengthen the peace is very important," Mordechai said. Defense officials said they discussed improving the ties between the two armies, including exchanging delegations and setting up a hot line. "I left many friends in Egyptian soil. This flight from Israel to Hurgada is a bridge between the generation of war and the generation of peace," he said in the cockpit, while gazing at the Sinai beneath him.

KGB spy gets four years in plea bargain

FORMER national table-tennis coach Alexander Radlis, convicted of spying for Russia, was sentenced to four years in prison and three years' suspended sentence in Tel Aviv District Court yesterday.

Radlis admitted to spying and reached a plea bargain agreement with the district attorney, which was adopted by Judges Amnon Strashnov, Ze'ev Hammer and Shelly Timen.

The judges ruled that although the charges of espionage and contact with a foreign agent are serious, no actual damage was caused

RAINE MARCUS

to the country and noted that Radlis himself cut off all contact with his operators eight years ago. He also cooperated with the security authorities, confessed and showed remorse, they said.

Radlis immigrated here in 1979, after being recruited some five years earlier by the KGB in his native Russia. He was trained in espionage, especially undercover communications systems and code-deciphering. According to the charge sheet, he was initially

paid \$1,000 cash, and from 1981-1988 sent letters to his operators written in invisible ink and was asked to decipher Morse code sent by the KGB. He was paid a over \$4,000 for his services.

He would meet with his operators abroad, using table-tennis matches in different countries as a cover. He was asked to relay to his operators information on the political and economic climate in Israel, details of his army reserve duty and the unit in which he served and conditions on the Lebanese border.

Meridor: Latest budget changes won't hurt the poor

EVELYN GORDON

THE Knesset debate on the economic arrangements bill accompanying the budget continued yesterday, but was largely overshadowed by the Hebron talks.

Though voting was originally supposed to take place round the clock, no votes were actually held either Monday or yesterday during the day, by mutual agreement of the various factions.

The Treasury spent the day in a flurry of public relations activity to persuade both MKs and the press of the merits of its latest revenue-raising proposals. The support of coalition MKs is essential, as it is trying to pass two of these proposals as amendments to the Arrangements Bill during the vote on its second and third readings.

Finance Minister Dan Meridor took the podium to explain the last-minute tax increases the Treasury introduced this week, meant to cover the revenue hole produced by changes made to the Arrangements Committee on Sunday. These measures are supposed to raise NIS 750 million: NIS 150m. from higher cigarette taxes, NIS 250m. from higher gas taxes, NIS 270m. from eliminating the half tax credit given to married working women, and NIS 80m. from increasing the number of sick days paid by employers, before the National Insurance Institute takes

over the payments, from two to nine. The first two measures have already gone into effect; the government hopes to pass the latter two as amendments to the Arrangements Bill.

In total, some NIS 2.5 billion of the NIS 7.2b. deficit-reduction package will come from increased revenues rather than budget cuts - mostly from taxes.

"Obviously it would have been better for the whole NIS 7.2b. to come from cutting expenditures, but it became clear that this was not possible," Meridor said. He defended the new measures from a social standpoint, noting that the gas tax hike, for instance, was accompanied by a cut in taxes on heating oil - something more necessary to the poor. Similarly, he said, since 62% of married women do not even pay taxes, eliminating their additional tax credit will not hurt the poor. Women with children already get tax credits which men do not get, he added, but this particular credit, based purely on gender, is unjustified.

Opposition MKs, however, hammered away at the government for having raised taxes despite having promised not to. "Read my lips," the prime minister said, noted Dalia Itzik, head of Labor's response team. "I think

he meant to say 'read my lipstick.' He continued to lie, time after time."

Dedi Zucker (Meretz) translated the word "tax" into 15 different languages, from Hindi to Portuguese, and promised to say it in every language spoken in Israel by the end of the night.

Coalition MKs responded by lauding the changes made in the bill from a social welfare standpoint.

"We achieved a great success," said Silvan Shalom (Likud), who heads the coalition in the Finance Committee. "The previous finance minister wasn't willing to hear about social issues."

According to the Treasury, the addition of NIS 750m. in new revenue-raising measures this week stemmed from three factors. The most important was the Finance Committee's refusal to increase co-payments for medicines and institute fees for visits to doctors and hospital clinics, leaving a NIS 560m. revenue hole.

Second was the replacement of planned cuts in child allowances with a one-year freeze on the updating of tax brackets for inflation. Originally, the Treasury had said these two options would save about the same amount, but it later discovered that the tax-bracket freeze would bring in NIS 125m. less.



Christians carry a banner in Bethlehem depicting the Virgin Mary in the town's Manger Square yesterday at the start of Christmas celebrations.

WEATHER

Forecast: Rise in temperatures.

AROUND THE WORLD

City	Low	High	Notes
Amsterdam	-5	2	clear
Bahia	23	30	clear
Buenos Aires	21	30	clear
Calcutta	28	34	clear
Chicago	18	25	clear
Copenhagen	-12	10	clear
Frankfurt	-8	2	clear
Geneva	-2	5	clear
Helsinki	-19	-12	clear
Hong Kong	19	26	clear
Jakarta	25	32	clear
London	8	15	clear
Los Angeles	15	22	clear
Mumbai	27	34	clear
Manila	27	34	clear
Medan	27	34	clear
Montreal	-19	-12	clear
New York	-2	5	clear
Osaka	14	21	clear
Paris	8	15	clear
Rangoon	25	32	clear
Singapore	27	34	clear
Sydney	18	25	clear
Tokyo	8	15	clear
Yokohama	8	15	clear
Zurich	0	7	clear

Winning cards and numbers

THE winning cards in yesterday's daily Chance drawing were the seven of spades, the queen of hearts, the jack of diamonds and the queen of clubs. In last night's weekly Lotto drawing, the winning numbers were 8, 10, 25, 34, 43 and 49, and the additional number was 35.

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THE JERUSALEM POST

Only original entry forms accepted, no photocopies, fax copies or separate sheets of paper. Campaign valid through February 21, 1997. Entry form will not be held over from previous week draws. Jerusalem Post

KGB spy gets four years in plea bargain

FORMER national table-tennis coach Alexander Radlis, convicted of spying for Russia, was sentenced to four years in prison and three years' suspended sentence in Tel Aviv District Court yesterday.

Radlis admitted to spying and reached a plea bargain agreement with the district attorney, which was adopted by Judges Amnon Strashnov, Ze'ev Hammer and Shelly Timen.

The judges ruled that although the charges of espionage and contact with a foreign agent are serious, no actual damage was caused

RAINE MARCUS

to the country and noted that Radlis himself cut off all contact with his operators eight years ago. He also cooperated with the security authorities, confessed and showed remorse, they said.

Radlis immigrated here in 1979, after being recruited some five years earlier by the KGB in his native Russia. He was trained in espionage, especially undercover communications systems and code-deciphering. According to the charge sheet, he was initially

paid \$1,000 cash, and from 1981-1988 sent letters to his operators written in invisible ink and was asked to decipher Morse code sent by the KGB. He was paid a over \$4,000 for his services.

He would meet with his operators abroad, using table-tennis matches in different countries as a cover. He was asked to relay to his operators information on the political and economic climate in Israel, details of his army reserve duty and the unit in which he served and conditions on the Lebanese border.

Meridor: Latest budget changes won't hurt the poor

THE Knesset debate on the economic arrangements bill accompanying the budget continued yesterday, but was largely overshadowed by the Hebron talks.

Though voting was originally supposed to take place round the clock, no votes were actually held either Monday or yesterday during the day, by mutual agreement of the various factions.

The Treasury spent the day in a flurry of public relations activity to persuade both MKs and the press of the merits of its latest revenue-raising proposals. The support of coalition MKs is essential, as it is trying to pass two of these proposals as amendments to the Arrangements Bill during the vote on its second and third readings.

Finance Minister Dan Meridor took the podium to explain the last-minute tax increases the Treasury introduced this week, meant to cover the revenue hole produced by changes made to the Arrangements Bill in the Knesset Finance Committee on Sunday.

These measures are supposed to raise NIS 750 million: NIS 150m. from higher cigarette taxes, NIS 250m. from higher gas taxes, NIS 270m. from eliminating the half tax credit given to married working women, and NIS 80m. from increasing the number of sick days paid by employers, before the National Insurance Institute takes

EVELYN GORDON

over the payments, from two to nine. The first two measures have already gone into effect, the government hopes to pass the latter two as amendments to the Arrangements Bill.

In total, some NIS 2.5 billion of the NIS 7.2b. deficit-reduction package will come from increased revenues rather than budget cuts - mostly from taxes.

"Obviously it would have been better for the whole NIS 7.2b. to come from cutting expenditures, but it became clear that this was not possible," Meridor said. He defended the new measures from a social standpoint, noting that the gas tax hike, for instance, was accompanied by a cut in taxes on heating oil - something more necessary to the poor. Similarly, he said, since 62% of married women do not even pay taxes, eliminating their additional tax credit will not hurt the poor. Women with children already get tax credits which men do not get, he added, but this particular credit, based purely on gender, is unjustified.

Opposition MKs, however, hammered away at the government for having raised taxes despite having promised not to. "Read my lips," the prime minister said, noted Dalia Itzik, head of Labor's response team. "I think

he meant to say 'read my lipstick.' He continued to lie, time after time."

Dedi Zucker (Meretz) translated the word "tax" into 15 different languages - from Hindi to Portuguese, and promised to say it in every language spoken in Israel by the end of the night.

Coalition MKs responded by lambasting the changes made in the bill from a social welfare standpoint.

"We achieved a great success," said Silvan Shalom (Likud), who heads the coalition in the Finance Committee. "The previous finance minister wasn't willing to hear about social issues."

According to the Treasury, the addition of NIS 750m. in new revenue-raising measures this week stemmed from three factors. The most important was the Finance Committee's refusal to increase co-payments for medicines and institute fees for visits to doctors and hospital clinics, leaving a NIS 560m. revenue hole.

Second was the replacement of planned cuts in child allowances with a one-year freeze on the updating of tax brackets for inflation. Originally, the Treasury had said these two options would save about the same amount, but it later discovered that the tax-bracket freeze would bring in NIS 125m. less.



Christians carry a banner in Bethlehem depicting the Virgin Mary in the town's Manger Square yesterday at the start of Christmas celebrations. (AP)

WEATHER

Haifa 13-23
Tiberias 9-22
Afula 9-22
Samaria 10-22
Tel Aviv 14-22
Jerusalem 10-20
Beersheba 9-24
Dead Sea 11-25
Eilat 11-23

Forecast: Rise in temperatures.

AROUND THE WORLD

	LOW	HIGH	
	C	F	
Amsterdam	-4	25	clear
Berlin	-4	23	clear
Buenos Aires	-1	30	clear
Cairo	18	27	clear
Chicago	-8	18	clear
London	-1	27	clear
Madrid	1	31	clear
Moscow	-10	14	clear
Paris	-1	27	clear
Rome	1	30	clear
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Tokyo	1	27	clear
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Zurich	-1	27	clear

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